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Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges of the Government Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta and the Way Forward

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Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges of the Government
Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta and the Way Forward

by

Sarah Emmanuel Isong

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2020

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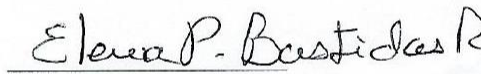
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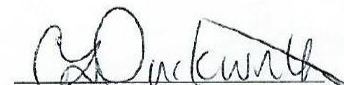
This dissertation was submitted by Sarah Emmanuel Isong under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents – Mr. Etia Etia Ndem and Mrs. Catherine Etia Ndem and, my parents-in-law - Mr. Timothy Udo Isong and Madam Tity Isong, who knew and valued the importance of education and ensured that their children were all educated. A special gratitude to my husband, Engr. Emmanuel Timothy Isong, whom I also dedicate my dissertation to. He picked up from where my parents stopped, insisted, encouraged, funded and supported me to pursue and obtain a doctorate degree despite my fears of the stress involved in such ventures. His unconditional love, constructive criticism, patience and the many sacrifices he made really gave me the strength to push through and complete my doctorate degree. I also dedicate my dissertation to my unborn children and children. My children, Abasiubong Emmanuel Isong and Abasiemediong Emmanuel Isong despite their young age, were very understanding and supportive. Each of them kept telling me ‘Mummy, I wish I can help you’ throughout the period of my research. You all hold a special place in my heart. Thank you so much and God’s best to you always.

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Abstract

This is a qualitative research study that used a narrative approach to explore the perspectives of the research participants (indigenes of the oil communities) on the challenges of the government amnesty program in the Niger Delta. Cyril Obi (2014) argues that the program is an unsustainable state-imposed peacebuilding project that only brought about a “graveyard peace” that enabled continued access to oil by the state and the oil companies operating in the region. Like other analysts and scholars, he explained that for peace to be sustained in the region, the underlying issues such as oil revenue allocation, environmental damage, poverty, unemployment, lack of basic infrastructures, marginalization of the Niger-Delta people, underdevelopment and negligence among other issues in the conflicts must be addressed. While some scholars and analysts believe that the amnesty program has been a huge success, others argue that the program was a total failure. Currently, there are still ongoing conflicts in the region as new militant groups have emerged. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perspective of the participants on the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region. The study analyzed interview data from purposeful sampling of youths, elders/community leaders and militants as well as ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States, to uncover why the program could not sustain peace in the region. From its findings, the study made recommendations that could assist in finding a lasting peace in the region.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This study sought to investigate the perspectives of the indigenes of oil communities in four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States) of Niger Delta regarding the Presidential Amnesty Program and why it could not sustain peace in the region just like previous government intervention programs and, the way forward. Consequently, this chapter starts with a review of the background of the Niger Delta. Thereafter, it will discuss the amnesty program, the problem statement and the organization of the study.

Background of the Niger Delta

The Niger Delta is situated in the southern part of Nigeria and bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by the Republic of Cameroon. It is a vast swampy oil basin that occupies a surface area of about 112, 110 square kilometers, which represents about 12% of Nigeria's total surface area (www.nndc.gov.ng). The region has a massive infrastructure consisting of 606 fields, 5, 284 wells and 7,000 kilometers of pipelines, ten export terminals, 275 flow stations, ten gas plants, four refineries and a massive liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector. The Niger Delta with its vast oil deposits, serves as the economic nerve center of Nigeria. Its oil accounts for more than 85% of the nation's revenue (Austin et al, 2007).

The region also comprises of nine states out of the thirty-six states in Nigeria and 185 local government areas and has a total population of about 32 million. A greater percentage of the people of the Niger Delta are in isolated communities that are only accessible by boat. The rich natural resources in the region have however become a curse

for its people as they have suffered environmental devastation, abject poverty and constant conflict. This is because politics and greed on the part of a corrupt government, withheld many of the earnings from these vast reserves from returning to the region to help develop it (Austin et al, 2007).

The Niger Delta used to be a peaceful region until 1958 when oil was discovered in the region and production in commercial quantities started. However, since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the region has been under severe crisis due to violence perpetrated by means of remotely detonated car bombs and highly sophisticated arms and equipment that are the tools of trades. More than 300 foreigners have been abducted and more than 1,000 workers taken hostage. The region has not known peace for close to two decades now. Violent inter-tribal and inter communal conflicts, arms proliferation, ethnic militias and illegal bunkering have become synonymous with the region (Austin et al, 2007).

Due to constant conflict, which has affected economic activities relating to oil and gas, the government placed emphasis on the security of the region causing the militarization of nearly the entire region. This has resulted in frequent clashes of the ethnic militant groups with the military and police forces. The ethnic militants are so bold and daring as they directly confront the federal and state security forces. The youth of the region, a vibrant and energetic generation, who should be supporting the productivity and future of the region are instead being continuously cut down by bullets from security operatives under the guise of war on terrorism. Communities are razed, and extra judicial killings are the order of the day (Austin et al, 2007). The competition for oil wealth in

Nigeria has fueled violence by innumerable ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, where oil is being produced.

In view of the constant conflicts and insecurity in the region, which also affected the mainstay of the Nigeria Economy, the Federal Government of Nigeria came up with various intervention programs at one stage or the other meant to restore peace and security in the region. The intervention programs included the establishment of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs to ensure the development of the region, 13% oil derivation fund paid monthly to oil producing states and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to host communities by the oil companies, none of which has so far been successful in addressing the crisis in the region. The most recent intervention program by the government is the Niger Delta Amnesty Program declared in 2009.

The Amnesty Program

The Amnesty Program is the latest platform deployed by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2009 towards resolving the protracted conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta. It was a 60-day unconditional amnesty period for the militants to willingly surrender their arms, renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect. In turn, the government pledged its commitment to institute programs to assist their disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and provision of reintegration assistance to militants.

Initiated and launched on June 25, 2009 by the late President Yar'Adua, the amnesty program originated from an earlier policy of his administration called the Seven Point Agenda of January 11, 2007, which stressed the need for security in Nigeria,

particularly in the Niger Delta (Adeyemi et al 2011). The amnesty program was offered to the Niger Delta militants on condition that they surrender their illegal weapons and renounce violence within 60 days from August 6, 2009 to October 4, 2009 (Tobor, J. O, 2014). Quoting Oluwaniyi (2011), Tobor explained that the militants, who accepted the terms of the amnesty and surrendered their weapons were taken to designated collection centers in six states of the Niger Delta (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States) and were paid Sixty-Five Thousand Naira (N65,000.00), equivalent of Four Hundred and Seven US Dollars (\$407 USD) as at 2009, per month alongside with vocational training. The payment of the N65,000.00 (\$407 USD) to the militants lasted for three months during the disarmament and demobilization phases. The US Dollar/Naira exchange rate in 2009 was \$1=N160.00 and the current rate is \$1=N360.00.

The amnesty program was significant for several reasons (Aghedo, 2012). Apart from the drastic reduction in wanton loss of lives, the intensity of violence in the region was reduced and the peace deal led to youth empowerment. More than 16,336 ex-combatants were demobilized and sent on training within and outside Nigeria. For instance, hundreds of the ex-militants were sent to Malaysia, Russia, South Africa, Britain and so on, for education and skills acquisition to facilitate their reintegration into the society (Aghedo, 2012). The Federal Government allocated the sum of N2.9 billion (\$18,238,994.00) for the program in 2009, N28 billion in 2010 (\$176,100,629.00) and N99 billion (\$622,641,509.00) in 2012. Altogether, a total of over N200 billion (over \$1, 257,861,635.00) was spent on the program as at the end of 2012 (El-Rufai, 2012).

The key objective of the amnesty program was to stabilize, consolidate and sustain security conditions in the Niger Delta, which were the requirements for promoting

economic development in the area and in the country generally (Kuku, 2012). However, the amnesty program only brought temporary peace that did not last in the volatile region. The temporary peace enabled the Federal Government and the oil companies to have unhindered access to the resources of the region. According to Kuku (2012), from the production of a paltry 700 barrels of oil per day in the first week of January 2009, the temporarily peace felt in the region as a result of the amnesty program, enabled an increase between 2.4 and 2.6 million barrels of oil production in a day.

According to Rebecca Golden-Timsar (2018), the amnesty program was originally designed to last for only five years, but it remains in effect to date. The author stated that even though the amnesty resulted in a cessation of hostilities against the federal government and the oil industry, the results are fraught with the making of new violence. She reported that, since the inception of the program, the state military presence has broadened rather than diminished and the military and politicians are also blamed for taking control of oil bunkering activities and for generating the conditions for the current reciprocal racketeering.

Problem Statement

The conflicts in the Niger Delta region are still ongoing and have been on for two decades now. Efforts to resolve the conflicts failed except for temporary peace felt in the region in 2009 when the Federal Government of Nigeria declared amnesty for the militants. Currently, there is renewed militancy in the region as new groups of militants such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), have emerged and returned to the trenches, where they blow up oil installations, electricity, gas and crude oil pipelines. The development is a huge problem to the nation and more efforts are focused towards

resolving the conflicts for peace to be sustained in the region. Therefore, it is obvious that the amnesty program just like the previous intervention programs, has not been able to bring permanent peace to the region.

Consequently, this study sought to investigate the perspectives of the research participants on why the government amnesty program just like the previous government intervention programs could not sustain peace in the region. I commenced my investigation by first reviewing the various causes of the Niger Delta conflicts, which different scholars attribute to include but not limited to resource appropriation, environmental damage by oil spillage, under development, unemployment and poverty, agitation for resource control, political marginalization of the Niger Delta people and corruption. This was followed by a review of the previous government intervention programs including the amnesty program. However, the focus of the study was on participants' perceptions of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region despite its benefits in the area of human development. The source of data was from interviews of the study participants. From the findings of the study, recommendations were made to either improve the program or for better intervention approach and way forward.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provide background information about the Niger Delta, discussed the amnesty program and problem statement. Chapter 2 reviews some of the available literatures on the origin of the Niger Delta conflicts and on the amnesty program. It also discussed the gaps in the literature and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and the procedures

for collection, analysis and evaluation of data. While Chapter 4 presents and discussed the findings from the main study, Chapter 5 presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

As earlier mentioned, the Niger Delta conflicts have been going on for almost two decades now and many scholars and analysts have written extensively on the conflicts as well as on the various government intervention programs including the amnesty program. To successfully carry out this study, there was need to review some of the available literatures on the origin of Niger Delta conflicts and on the amnesty program in order to have a deeper understanding of the subject and be guided in the study.

Background of the Niger Delta Conflicts

Until the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the Niger Delta in 1958, Nigeria's economy depended on Agriculture. However, with the oil boom in the mid-70s, Agriculture, the major occupation of the people was abandoned, and Nigeria became totally dependent on oil. Since then, the Niger Delta oil has become the mainstay of Nigeria's economy to date and provides about 95% of foreign exchange earnings for the country. With a maximum crude oil production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day, Nigeria ranks as Africa's largest oil producer and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world.

Oil production in Nigeria came with many problems. Apart from the increase in oil related activities without commensurate improvement in the lives of the people of the region, other problems include unhealthy competition for the distribution of the oil wealth, mismanagement of the oil wealth, environmental degradation, underdevelopment, poverty and above all, the struggle for the control of the oil wealth by the inhabitant of the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta people are angry about the environmental degradation,

water pollution due to oil spillage, underdevelopment of the region and lack of benefits from the extensive oil resources in the region. They feel exploited and short-changed by the government and the oil companies and want to control their resources.

They pointed out that before oil was discovered in commercial quantities in the Niger-Delta region, derivation was the basis for resource sharing and allocation in the country. According to them, in the 1950s, 100 per cent of resource allocation went to the region, where the resource is derived and in the 60s after Nigeria's independence, 50% of resource allocation went to the region, where the resource is derived, 30% to all the regions including the one, which has had the 50% derivation, and 20% to the central government. They further complained that the above stated percentage for resource allocation was at a time when the three largest ethnic nationalities in the country (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa) provided the country's major resources. The Northern part of Nigeria, dominated by the Hausas and the Fulanis produced groundnuts, hides and skin, the Western part, which are the Yorubas, were famous for cocoa production and the Eastern part, which are the Igbos, had cola and palm oil. However, with oil becoming the dominant resource, derivation was reduced from 50% to Zero percent. This brought about reaction from the people of the South, who are the "so called" minority group in the country. They believe that the cause of their exploitation is primarily because they are the minority group within the country. Continued agitation by the people of Niger Delta led to 1% derivation formula, then 3% and now 13%.

A careful look at the above stated facts show that the federal government is not being fair to all regions especially those from the minority side. Given the above facts, the major issue on ground regarding the crisis in the region seem to be that of justice and

fairness. Denying the Niger-Delta of their resource control coupled with the destruction of their water and farmlands, with little or no concern for the people is the underlying reason for the conflicts. The series of conflicts in the region between insurgency/militant groups and government forces often results in wanton destruction of properties and death on both sides.

Furthermore, the activities of the multi-national oil companies (the Royal Dutch Shell, the Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Agip, Elf, Total and Texaco) operating in the Niger-Delta have raised many concerns and criticism. A series of repressive and corrupt governments in Nigeria have been supported and maintained by western governments and oil corporations, keen on benefiting from the fossil fuels that can be exploited. It is worth noting also that there is a long and terrible record of environmental destruction and human rights violations in the oil-producing region due to the activities of these foreign oil companies. The gross level of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration and extraction in the region has gone unchecked for more than 40 years now. Evidence shows that the oil companies operating in the Niger-Delta have not only disregarded their responsibilities towards the environment but have acted with the military's repression of Nigerian citizens. The profit-driven collusion between the multi-national oil companies and the past and the present Nigerian governments has cost many lives and continues to threaten the stability of the region.

Therefore, scholars such as Ikelegbe (2006), Obi (2009) and Collier (2007) among others, have argued that oil in the region is more of a curse than a blessing to the people of Niger Delta, who have been on the receiving end of the dreadful government oppression and brutality, often resulting in fatalities (Ikechukwu, J. E. (2012). However,

Obi (2007, 2008, 2009) asserted that the roots of violent conflict in the Niger Delta just like other oil rich contexts in Africa do not lie in pools of oil but in the inequitable (transnational, local, national and global) power relations embedded in the production of oil and the highly skewed distribution of its benefits and pernicious liabilities. According to him, this manifested in the non-response to – and later repression of – peaceful protests against the exploitation and pollution of the oil rich region by a state-transnational oil alliance, whose activities alienated the ordinary people from the land and means of their livelihoods, poisoned the ecosystem, deepened pre-existing inequalities and grievances, and paved the way for the descent into violent conflict (Ukeje 2001, Okonta 2005, Ukiwo 2007, Obi 2010).

The campaign for resource control by the people of the Niger Delta first started in 1966, when Isaac Adaka Boro led a rebellion with his Delta Volunteer Service (DVS), an Ijaw group, against the Federal Government and declared Niger Delta a Republic (Ikechukwu, 2012). According to Ikechukwu, even though the uprising was crushed by the federal government within days and Boro later killed, it brought consciousness to the minds of the people. This was what inspired later activists such as Ken Saro Wiwa and “Mujahid” Dokubo-Asari to bring to international awareness the exploitation and suppression of the people of the region. Saro Wiwa raised awareness about the environmental pollution caused by the oil industry and highlighted the lack of representation of the Niger Delta people, especially the Ogonis. He helped found the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which in 1990 published an Ogoni Bill of Rights. Saro-Wiwa led a non-violent campaign against environmental degradation of the land and waters of Ogoniland in Niger Delta by the operations of the

multinational oil companies especially the Shell oil company, in the region. He was also an outspoken critic of the federal government of Nigeria, which he noted to be reluctant in enforcing environmental regulations on the foreign oil companies operating in the region (Susan Farbstein, 2015, www.medium.com).

As the leader of MOSOP, Saro-Wiwa was a thorn in the flesh of the then Nigerian military regime of late General Sani Abacha. The junta found him a much more principled fighter for what he believed to be right and just. However, on the 21 May 1994, during a secret meeting held by a left wing of MOSOP, four prominent Ogoni chiefs were gruesomely murdered. Subsequently, Saro-Wiwa and eight others were arrested and charged with inciting the youths to murder. They were later arraigned before a ‘special’ military tribunal, which sentenced them to death by hanging (Agbiboa, 2013).

According to Ledum Mitee, former President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in a Punch Newspaper of September 3, 2019, no one could save Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others from “a heartfelt” Gen.Sani Abacha, who had already made up his mind to kill the renowned writer and environmental activist. He said that Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others’ death sentence sparked local and international outrage. The Commonwealth and many world leaders including late President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, pleaded against the Nigeria military junta’s decision to kill Ken Saro-Wiwa and the eight others yet, despite the public outcry against their death sentence, they were killed. This resulted in Nigeria’s suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations for three years (www.Punch.com). The arrest and execution of Saro Wiwa and eight of his colleagues in the hands of the Abacha regime in 1995

caused outrage and drew international attention to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta for the first time (Asuni, 2009).

A decade after Saro-Wiwa and eight others were hanged, the Niger Delta conflicts escalated as various militant groups sprung up using different methods ranging from kidnapping of expatriate and local oil workers, disruption of oil pipelines etc. to challenging the activities of the oil companies and the negligence of the region by the federal government, thereby daring the Nigerian state (Ikechukwu, 2012). The militant groups include but are not limited to the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) among many others (Ikechukwu, 2012).

Claiming to represent the people of the Niger Delta, the various militant groups are dedicated to armed struggle against what they regard as the exploitation and oppression of the Niger Delta people by the government and the multinational oil corporations operating in the region. The militant groups all claim to be fighting for the interest of the Niger-Delta people (Handson, 2007). It is worth noting that before the discovery of oil in the region in 1958, about sixty (60) years ago, the Niger Delta was essentially a pristine environment (Afinotan and V.Ojakorotu, 2009) with fishing and farming as the main occupation of the inhabitants. However, Afinotan and Ojakorotu (2009) further explained that oil exploration and oil related activities in the region have made it barren of agricultural activities as the inhabitants' farmlands and the aquatic ecosystem have been destroyed due to oil spillage and environmental pollution from oil activities. The assertion corresponds with that of scholars like Ikelegbe (2006) and

Collier (2007) among others, who argued that oil in the region is more of a curse than a blessing to the people of Niger Delta. This seems to be true when seeing the people of Niger Delta continue to live in abject poverty in the midst of their abundant resources, which the entire nation depends on.

For almost six decades now, the Nigerian government has been depending on the Niger-Delta's non-renewable oil wealth and made hundreds of billions of dollars from its oil revenue without paying attention to the region. Therefore, despite the region's abundant resources, which the country depends mostly on, the region happens to be the most under-developed section of the country. The people of the area still live in abject poverty without even the most basic amenities such as water and electricity. The region is rich and poor at the same time. It is rich in natural resources but impoverished by the oil companies and its government, which expropriates its entire resources. Therefore, the Niger Delta people through the various militant groups are fighting to control their resources.

Due to constant conflict, which affected economic activities relating to oil and gas (the mainstay of the nation's economy), the government placed emphasis on the security of the region causing the militarization of nearly the entire region. This resulted in frequent clashes of the ethnic militant groups with the military and police forces. Communities are razed, and extra judicial killing are the order of the day (Austin et al, 2007). Austin et al explained further that the militant groups in the region constantly fight with the government forces, sabotage oil installations, take foreign oil workers hostage and carried out lethal car bombings thereby disrupting oil production in the region. They

object to the environmental degradation, underdevelopment of the region and lack of benefits from the extensive oil resources to the local communities in the region.

As earlier stated in this paper, in efforts to intervene in the Niger Delta conflicts, the Nigerian government came up with various intervention programs including the recent amnesty program. However, none of these programs could resolve the conflicts in the region or sustain the little peace it brought. For instance, Egwemi (2010) explained that the amnesty program elicited different reactions from scholars and analysts. While some believed that the program has been a huge success, others argue that it was not a success. According to him, Uduagban (2009), Jega (2009) and Ofehe (2009) believed the success of the program. Quoting Ajaero (2010), he said that for ‘those who actually know the cost of violence and the quantity of arms and ammunition in the region, the decision of the repentant militants to embrace peace was one of the best thing that happened to the country in 2009 because a state of war was averted by their decision to lay down arms’. On the other hand, Egwemi noted that Ojo (2009), Peterside (2009), Mitee (2010) and Adaramola (2009) all believed that the amnesty program failed as there were still conflicts in the region. He concluded that without reasonable doubt the amnesty program brought relative peace and stability to Niger Delta, however, sustaining that peace was a great concern as the issues in the conflicts were still yet to be addressed. This is where the purpose of this study, which is exploring the perspective of the indigenes regarding the amnesty program and its inability to sustain peace in the region comes in.

In a review of the journal titled ‘Revisiting the Peace-Building Efforts in Post Conflict Niger Delta, Nigeria: A Case Study of the amnesty programme’ by Omokhoa (2015), the author observed that the amnesty program was a welcomed development to a

large section of the society and groups including international bodies, who pledged their support for the program. He opined that the program had no doubt brought some benefits to the Niger Delta people particularly the youths, whose lives were improved as it presented to them opportunity for capacity building through the various training programs designed for them in Nigeria and abroad. However, the author noted that with the amnesty program, there was neither war nor peace and there was neither winner nor loser in the conflict. He argued that while the relative peace felt in the region enabled increased oil production resulting in huge benefits for the state and the oil companies, the region was still faced with challenges. Therefore, until the challenges were addressed, there will not be stability and development in the Niger Delta. He stated that the root causes of the conflict were infrastructural decay, marginalization and widespread unemployment and uneven distribution of resources in the region among others.

In another paper review, the authors, Mark Davidheiser and Kiale Nyiayaana (2011), examined the amnesty program in the Niger Delta and argued that the program was constructed as a gift to the militants and ignored the fundamental causes of the conflicts. To them, instead of achieving demobilization, the program may end remobilizing militia groups. They further argued that essential component of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) were peace negotiations and agreement between combatants and the government and noted that the amnesty program was not preceded by negotiations and so created a gap that threatened its success. According to the authors, neglecting and failure to negotiate and agree on the framework for the amnesty will undermined the success of the program. Beside calling on the Nigerian government to embark on comprehensive negotiations to redefine the amnesty

program, they contend that the DDR initiatives must be supplemented by discussions identifying the fundamental sources of the conflicts and robust action to ameliorate them otherwise, insecurity and insurgency may be expected to continue plaguing the region.

Cyril Obi (2014) in another paper contends that the amnesty program is an unsustainable state-imposed peacebuilding project to preserve the condition for oil extraction by local, national and global actor. He explained that the focus of the amnesty program was on getting armed groups in the region to renounce the use of violence and subscribe to a government-sponsored Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program. Quoting the authors, Asuni (2011, 158-168) and Kew & Obi (2010), he also said that the amnesty program was both a response to domestic politics involving competing factions of the Nigerian ruling elite (over high oil stakes) and international pressures on the government to rein in the insurgent/armed groups, whose acts of sabotage and kidnapping of expatriate oil workers disrupted oil activities thereby resulting in huge losses to the government and oil companies.

According to Obi, the consultations proceeding the amnesty program, which only engaged the militia commanders and their local patrons capable of threatening oil interests in the region was due to the inability of the military to neutralize the insurgents. The members of the wider Niger Delta society were ignored. Apart from engaging the source of threats to continued access to oil, the state also avoided engagement with popular organizations and environmental rights-based groups that long adopted non-violent protest in pressuring government to address the deep-seated grievances and demands for social justice, equity and respect for the dignity and human rights of the Niger Delta people (Obi, 2014). He concluded that the amnesty program was too fragile

to sustain peace in the region in the medium to long term and that apart from the fragile and temporary peace the program brought to the region, the persistence of adverse social and structural conditions characterized by widespread poverty, wide socio-economic inequalities, youth unemployment among others were not addressed.

In further review of another paper by Watts and Ibaba (2011), the authors explained that even though the amnesty program resulted in the surrendering of firearms, the renunciation of militancy by over 20,000 militia youths, the cessation of attacks on oil installation, and subsequent rise in oil production, concerns on insecurity in the region were still very high. He said that this was due to struggles over who controls or benefits from the oil, corruption, pollution and environmental degradation, underdevelopment among other issues in the conflicts, which the government was yet to address.

Another paper by Iro Aghedo (2012) argued that the boldest demonstration to peace-building in the troubled Niger Delta was the late Nigerian President Yar'Adua (2007-2010)'s granting of an unconditional amnesty to the Niger Delta militants. The author said that despite several failed past efforts at peacebuilding, the amnesty program was applauded by scores of observers and analysts as the panacea for the protracted conflicts of the region and the surest instrumentality for the development of the region. However, despite appreciable benefits such as human development, the program is characterized by several political, economic, social and security challenges, which have undermined its effectiveness (Iro Aghedo, 2012). According to Aghedo, what the program has achieved so far is only a 'peace of the graveyard', where there was a reduction in continued violent hostility between the militants and the state security forces, but sustainable peace remains elusive. He sought to know what could have been responsible

for the situation of no war and yet no peace and concluded that for the program to be effective and peace sustained, it must be broadened. All stakeholders including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil societies, human rights groups and other members of the oil communities affected by the conflicts, who are not militants, should be carried along.

Jegede and Olu-Olu (2015) in their paper, reviewed that while the amnesty program was the best program to ensuring peace within the Niger Delta, it was introduced as an economic strategy to tame the violence in the region to enable the state and the oil companies to maximize oil exploration and exportation, all for the huge economic benefits. The program also benefitted just a handful of erstwhile dangerous militants while the rest and majority of the Niger Delta were still writhing in painful neglect. The authors concluded that the amnesty program was just a mere temporary salvation to the Niger Delta region because the root cause of the crisis and reason for agitation was not addressed. For the program to be successful in sustaining peace in the region, the authors recommended that the government go back to the drawing board and review all the loopholes in the policy and addressed them. The government should also empower the unemployed members of the region, who are not militants (Jegede and Olu-Olu, 2015). Above all, he maintained that the issues that brought about agitation by the people of the region need to be addressed for peace to reign and be sustained.

Oludoro and Oludoro (2012) in their paper stated that though the amnesty program seems to have brought a relative peace to the region, there appears to be little progress being made to end the environmental degradation and human rights abuse that are the lot of inhabitants in the region. Efforts at recovering the damaged ecosystem have

been minimal, sporadic and inadequate. The authors explained that ‘the sheer scale of monumental environmental damage to the local fishing and farming, habitat and biodiversity, and the means of livelihood of the people in the region was confirmed by the UNEP Ogoni Environmental Report (2011) when it called for initial \$1 billion fund to set up an independent fund to clean up pollution in Ogoniland, which it believed may take 25-30 years to remediate’. Like many other scholars and analysts, they noted that the solution to the Niger Delta conflicts does not only lie in the amnesty program, but also in the cleaning up of the environment and putting an end to incessant gas flaring and oil pollution which directly affect the lives of the people who live in the region (Oludoro and Oludoro, 2012).

From the reviewed literature, more light has been shed on the origin of the Niger Delta conflicts and the amnesty program. It has been observed that all the scholars and analysts, whether in support of the success of the amnesty program or not, believed that for peace to reign and be sustained in the region, the economic, political and social issues among other issues in the conflicts, must be addressed alongside the government intervention program for the region. According to scholars as reflected in the literature review, the issues involved in the conflicts include but not limited to oil revenue allocation, environmental damage (caused by oil spillage, gas flaring, oil pipeline explosion), poverty, unemployment, lack of basic infrastructures in the region, marginalization of the Niger-Delta people (minority group in the country), underdevelopment of the region, negligence, corruption and bad governance, insecurity, violence, relationship and communication.

Gaps in Literature

Based on my review of available literatures, while so many analysts and scholars have written extensively on the strength and weaknesses of the Niger Delta amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region, there was no primary, empirical data based research on the views of the people at the center of the conflict regarding the program and its inability to sustain peace in the region. The focus of existing studies has always been on the general assessment of the performances of the amnesty program and the research participants in most cases, are often drawn from oil companies and relevant amnesty program agencies including other government agencies or institutions. To the best of my knowledge, none of such study ever sought to explore the perspectives of the indigenes of the oil communities about the program. Therefore, in conducting this study, I sought to close this gap in the literature and also verify whether or not the program was constructed as a gift to militants for them to allow the state and oil companies continued access to oil as claimed by some scholars and analysts. Exploring the perspectives of four different groups of people (youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the program), who are also indigenes of selected oil communities in four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) in the Niger Delta, enabled a better understanding of why the program, which brought some 'benefits' to ex-militants, could not sustain peace in the region. The findings of the study guided the recommendations to improve the program or a better alternative intervention approach that will not only bring peace but also sustain it.

Theoretical Framework

To carry out a successful study, it was important to have a better understanding of the conflict in the Niger Delta by looking at it through the lenses of some existing theories of conflict. Therefore, I looked at the conflict in this study through the lenses of three theories namely, relative deprivation, human needs and structural violence theories.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation (RD) is used in the Social Sciences to describe feelings or measures of economic, political or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. It is an experience of being deprived of something to which one thinks he or she is entitled to (Walker & Smith, 2001). It refers to the discontent people feel when they compare their positions to that of others similarly situated and discover that they have less than they deserve.

Gurr (1971) refers to Relative Deprivation theory as any perceived discrepancy between people's expectations and their capabilities to fulfil those expectations. According to him, relative deprivation (RD) is 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence' (1971:23). It is the discrepancies between what people want, their value expectations, and what they actually gain, their value accruing capabilities. Gurr contends that people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and the intensity of discontent/frustration '[varies] with the severity of depression and inflation' (1971:87). The discrepancy between people's expectations and what they can actually attain consequently leads to frustration and the 'existence of frustration always leads to some form of violence' (1971:33). He explained that the

higher the degree of frustration, the greater the political instability. He further posits that the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly with the average degree of perceived discrepancy between the value expectations and value capabilities' (1971:60). This gap between an individual's expected and achieved welfare results in collective discontent.

Relative deprivation as a theory that explains collective violence attracted criticisms from scholars in political science such as Edward Muller (1980) and Charles Tilly (2003), and in Sociology such as John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977 and 2001) (Pettigrew, 2015). One of the criticisms of this theory (RD) is that it fails to explain why some people who feel discontent fail to act and join social movements. This notwithstanding, the theory helps to partially explain and find solutions to conflicts such as that of the Niger Delta.

A research on the conflicts revealed that the people of the region feel deprived of what they see as their entitlements. They object to the environmental degradation, underdevelopment of the region and lack of benefits from the extensive oil resources to the local communities. Niger Delta being the economic nerve center of the country (Nigeria), the people expected to benefit more from oil resources than any other region in the country especially in terms of development and employment. However, the reverse is the case. The people are angry that their region is about the poorest in the country even though oil production, the mainstay of the country's economy comes from there. Unlike other regions, the Niger Delta region has been identified with poverty, sickness, high rate of unemployment and lack of good infrastructures. The environment is heavily polluted due to the activities of multinational oil companies in the area and so it suffers

degradation. The livelihoods of the people (farming and fishing) have been destroyed and the government does not seem to be concerned about the plight of the people.

Furthermore, the people are angry that the government deprived them of their right to control their resources. They pointed out that before oil was discovered in commercial quantities in the Niger-Delta region, derivation was the basis for resource sharing and allocation in the country. According to them, in the 1950s, 100 per cent of resource allocation went to the region where the resource is derived and in the 60s after Nigeria's independence, 50% of resource allocation went to the region where the resource is derived, 30% to all the regions including the one which has had the 50% derivation, and 20% to the Central government (www.usip.org).

They complained that the above stated percentage for resource allocation was at a time when the three largest ethnic nationalities in the country (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa) provided the country's major resources. The Northern part of Nigeria, dominated by the Hausas and the Fulanis produced groundnuts, hides and skin, the Western part, which are the Yorubas, were famous for cocoa production and the Eastern part, which are the Igbos had cola and palm oil. However, with oil becoming the dominant resource, derivation was reduced from 50% to Zero percent (Beko Ransome-Kuti, 2008). This brought about reaction from the people of the South (Niger Delta), who are the "so called" minority group in the country. They believe that the cause of their exploitation is primarily because they are the minority group within the country. Continued agitation by the people led to 1% derivation formula, then 3% and now 13% (Beko Ransome-Kuti, 2008). Consequently, a careful look at the above stated facts reveals that the major issue on ground regarding the crisis is that of justice and fairness. Denying the Niger-Delta of

their resource control coupled with the destruction of their water and farmlands, with little or no concern for the people by the government, are some of the underlying reasons for the conflicts.

The situation is also said to be worsened by the corrupt nature of government officials and some leaders of the local communities as well as law enforcement officials, who are supposed to protect the interest of its citizens. The people see the government officials, leaders of the local communities and law enforcement officials as conniving with the management of the oil companies to deprive them of their rights and entitlements (www.globalissues.org). Therefore, they are demanding for their rights and entitlements as well as the control of their resources. These grievances brought about insurgency and conflicts in the region, where oil plants and pipelines are destroyed, oil workers kidnapped and there is wanton destruction of properties and lives. The militants believed that through protest and violent activities, they will draw attention to their plight in the region and possibly have their demands met.

Relative deprivation theory in part, helped in the analysis and better understanding of the conflicts in the Niger Delta even though some scholars have criticized it for failing to explain why some people, who feel discontent fail to act and join social movements.

Burton's Human Needs Theory

The human needs theories propose that all humans have certain basic universal needs and that when these needs are not met, conflict is likely to occur. This is because human needs essentials for their survival (Marker, 2003). Burton (1997) developed the conflict theory from Maslow's idea of human needs, and Sites (1973) social order

contribution, to expatiate on the role that human need plays in better understanding social conflict. Like Maslow, Burton believes that human needs are universal and the inability to meet these needs will lead to conflict.

Connecting human needs with conflicts, Burton explained that conflict is inevitable when social and political institutions fail to fulfill what he described as non-negotiable ontological human needs. These include development, security, and recognition and identity (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall, 2011). He looks at how universal human needs are often neglected leading to groups' use of violence to claim their rights and satisfy their needs. Sites in his book, *The Basis of Social Order* (1973), defined eight essential needs whose satisfaction were required to produce 'normal' (non-deviant, non-violent) individual behavior to include consistency of response, stimulation, security, and recognition, and derivative needs for justice, meaning, rationality and control. Building on these, Burton explains the need to obtain identity, recognition, security and personal development as precursors to a peaceful society, and examines the role of aggression, and asks whether aggression is learned as a result of social conflict. Consequently, Burton states that 'denial by society of recognition and identity would lead at all social levels, to alternative behaviors designed to satisfy needs, be it ethnic wars, street gangs or domestic violence.' (Burton, 1997, p. 87). In addition, Human Needs Theory suggests that for young people to feel they belong to society, and that they share a role in society, recognition and identity needs must be met and societies must adjust to the needs of the citizens and individuals, not the individuals adjusting to the needs of society.

Burton and other theorists also recognized that they are negotiable and non-negotiable issues (Coate and Rosati, 1998). According to them, needs, unlike interests, cannot be traded, suppressed or bargained for (Carrol et al, 1988). Marker explained that the human needs approach moves away from the traditional negotiation models (interest-based negotiation, which views conflict in terms of win-win or consensus-based solutions) and conventional power models (used in negotiation and International relations) that construct conflict and conflict management in terms of factual and zero-sum game perspectives. The human needs approach supports collaborative and multifaceted problem-solving models related techniques that consider the complexity of human life, the insistent nature of human needs and analyze the fundamental sources of conflict while focusing on meeting people's needs. These theorists believe that needs cannot be compromised but can be met and addressed in a win-win way (Marker, 2003).

Burton's human needs theory has been criticized. Some critics like Rubenstein have questioned the definition of human needs and how to know what human needs are involved in a conflict situation etc. Others believed that many conflicts involved both human needs and interests. Therefore, conflict cannot be resolved by just meeting needs but by meeting both (needs and interests) (Marker, 2003).

Despite its criticism, Burton's human needs theory can be used to analyze and help resolve the Niger Delta conflicts. This theory focuses on the root causes of conflict and highlights the commonality of all humans. Most of the demands of the Niger Delta people are due to needs (human needs) - employment, protection of their environment, good infrastructures, their recognition as stakeholders in their own resources etc. For instance, despite the abundant natural resources of the region, which the entire nation

depends on, the region is poor and underdeveloped compared to other regions of the country. Most of the local communities are only accessible by boats as there are no roads. There is no electricity and no pipe-borne water etc. The waters are polluted, and farmland has been destroyed due to oil spillage, thereby, causing death of fishes and other sea food as well as infertility of the land for growing crops. These have no doubt affected the livelihood of the people of Niger Delta and has caused serious poverty leading to protest in order to attract the attention of the nation and the international community to their plight with the hope that their needs would be met.

While the various government intervention programs try to address the conflicts in the region, the sources of the conflicts (pollution, environmental degradation, infrastructures, recognition etc.) are ignored. John Burton's human needs theory acknowledges the discomfort caused by "poverty, economic inequity and social injustice" as it relates to an individual's unmet needs (Jeong, 2000). This causality has created unrest within communities, which is easily ignited by any opportunity to express concerns of unmet needs. Therefore, regardless of any intervention program designed for the region, if the root causes of the conflicts (human needs) are not addressed, conflicts will continue in the region. For peace to reign, collaborative and problem-solving approaches, where the parties involved come together to 'jointly attack the source of the problems that cause conflicts (Ury, 1993, pg.9) must be adopted. Development of the region, protection of the environment, provision of adequate infrastructure (good road network, lights, pipe borne water etc.), stakeholder recognition and employment will reduce poverty and enable the people meet their basic needs. Both needs, and the interests of the region must be met. Consequently, the human needs theory, in part, provides a

framework to better understand the Niger Delta conflicts in terms of the needs of the people in the region.

Structural Violence Theory

Structural violence refers to systematic ways in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantaged individuals (www.structuralviolence.org). It informs of the use of the established institutions like the social, political, educational, religious, judicial, and scientific arrangements to justify targeted discrimination against any individuals, or groups in the society. According to Johan Galtung, the proponent of this theory, rather than conveying a physical image, structural violence is an ‘avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs’ (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence, therefore, explores how political, economic and cultural structures result in the occurrence of avoidable violence, most commonly seen as the deprivation of basic human needs. He blamed structural violence for the inability of people to benefit from economic, political and cultural structures especially when some classes or groups in the society have easy access to resources and opportunities and others are denied access to same. He said that denial of basic needs hinders people from reaching their goals and attempts to link personal suffering with political, social and cultural choices.

Galtung (1969) further explained that structural, and cultural violence cause direct violence, and direct violence also in turn causes or reinforces structural, and cultural violence. According to Galtung, direct violence, which could be physical, or verbal is seen in how people behave, and this originated from structural violence. He also noted that direct violence comes in the form of beatings, torture, sexual assault, humiliation and so on.

Structural violence theory has been criticized even though it has been used to describe societies where some classes or groups of people are targeted and discriminated against. One of the criticisms of the theory is that to blame structural violence for the failure of some 'oppressed' people in the society is in a way encouraging laziness in the society and lack of creativity. According to this criticism, it is easy for one to complain of being a victim when there is something, he or she could do to achieve his or her goals and also contribute to the society. One of the critics, Parson (2007) also accuses Galtung of oversimplifying structural violence by applying it as an 'umbrella concept'. According to Parson structural violence is often used as an umbrella concept for other types of injustice such as oppression, marginalization, inequality, exploitation, domination, and repression. An overly broad definition of structural violence ignores opportunities and possibilities for cultural transformation.

Despite its criticisms, the structural violence theory still explained in part, the reason for the Niger Delta conflicts. An understanding of this theory reveals that it could be applied to the experiences of the people of the Niger Delta for better understanding of the conflicts. For instance, structural violence is obvious here in the way the government military and police forces, who are supposed to protect the people, turned around to beat, torture and even killed them. All in a bid to end the protests by the people. This brought about open armed confrontation of the government forces by the militants leading to serious casualties and death on both sides. Consequently, violence applied by the government established institutions (military and police) have indeed promoted the cycles of violence and more conflicts in the region. The government security and law enforcement structures have indeed provided the liberty for officials to inflict pains on

the people instead of addressing the root causes of their problems. The Niger-Delta people see the Federal Government as ‘one-armed bandit’, which makes laws and policies that allows the seizing of their lands and waters, oil and other natural resources and then send in armed men to kill them. Also, the government laws, policies and programs seem to favor very few people while neglecting the masses, who feel marginalized. According to Galtung, structural violence can form and direct the way people behave, hence, the vandalization of oil pipelines, attacks of government forces and their posts, hostage taking/kidnaping and wanton destruction of oil facilities by the militants. These are partly as a result of the direct violence on the people by established government structures, which brought about violent retaliation by the people of the Niger Delta.

There is also the issue of corruption by the leaders and government officials. The money provided for the development and provision of basic infrastructural facilities in the region is most often diverted for personal use thereby neglecting the purpose for which it was meant for. Therefore, the people are not happy with the corrupt leaders hence their protest and violence. Galtung explained that direct violence results from the refusal of the government to meet the essential human needs of a people thereby making the people to fight against the negligence. Furthermore, evidence from relevant sources of information and literatures, revealed that the oil companies operating in the region have not only disregarded their responsibilities towards the environment but have supported the government forces’ repression of the people. These has further promoted the cycles of violence we see in this conflict.

Looking at the Niger Delta conflict through the lenses of structural violence theory also helps to explain the reasons for the conflict and provide a way forward for possible resolution that will enable sustainable peace.

The next chapter will be discussing the research method.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Qualitative research methodology with narrative approach was used in this study. As earlier mentioned, the choice of this method and approach was in consideration of the purpose of the study, which was to explore the perspective of participants about the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the Niger Delta as well as the way forward. The main advantage of this method of research is that it provides the researcher with the opportunity and possibility of developing trust and explores the respondent's perceptions and feelings through dialogue (Riessman, 2008). The method involves in-depth exploration of a phenomenon using tools that can provide rich and comprehensive textual data such as semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2013). The development of trust with this method of research enables the participants to disclose important information during the interviews. Therefore, this method and approach was appropriate for this study since the use of semi-structured interviews was important in capturing the perceptions of the participants regarding the subject of study.

The main research question for this study was 'How do people from the oil communities in the Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program? Also addressed in the study were the following Sub-Questions:

1. How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?
2. How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program?
3. How do the militants in Niger Delta perceive the program?

4. How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive the program?

One on one, face-to-face interviews were carried out with 15 indigenes from oil producing communities in four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States) of the Niger Delta on their perceptions of the amnesty program and the way forward. Prior to the commencement of the study, a pilot study was conducted to validate the interview guide. The pilot phase of the study was important as it enabled me to reflect on my experiences and revise my approach to the proposed interview process (Seidman, 1998) for the main study. The two participants in the pilot study did not participate in the main study and their perspectives, although like that of the main study participants, were not considered for analysis in the main study.

In summary, this chapter presents the research method and discusses the role of the researcher, researcher bias, the method of participant selection, the instrument of data collection and analysis, the pilot study, main study, assumptions, limitations, issues of trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations.

Justification for Qualitative Research Method

Cooper and Finley (2014, pg.2) defines qualitative research methodology as the study of people and phenomena in their natural setting and reflects an emphasis on the meaning people find in their natural social life. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008, pg.12), this methodology “allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables”. As earlier mentioned, the main advantage of this method of research is that it provides the researcher with the opportunity and possibility of developing trust and

explores the respondent's perceptions and feelings through dialogue (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, this research method was important for my study because it allowed me to explore and better understand the participants' perceptions of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the Niger Delta. Maxwell (1996) posited that the inclusion of participant perspectives in the research study is the key characteristic of qualitative research.

Justification for Narrative Approach

Lieblich, Tuval-Marshiach, & Zilber (1998, Pg.2) as quoted by Cooper and Finley (2014), define narrative inquiry as 'any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials. "It is a method that allows researcher to collect, analyze and interpret the stories people tell about their lives"' (Cooper and Finley, Pg. 139). While taking into account the various approaches in qualitative research study, the narrative approach was considered for this study. According to Riessman (2008), narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporarily organized (Riessman, 2008). It also refers to texts at several levels that overlap- stories told by research participants, which could be interpretative by themselves or interpretative accounts developed by an investigator based on interviews and fieldwork observation etc. (Riessman, pg.5).

Narrative inquiry is grounded in the study of a particular phenomenon and the analyst's interest is on how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning, that is, make particular points to an audience (Riessman, 2008, pg. 11). The focus of the researcher or investigator here is

usually on ‘particular actors, in particular social places, at particular time’ (pg. 11) and attention is given to the sequences of action.

Riessman explained that the researcher does not find narratives but participates in their creation (pg.21). Therefore, during the research interview, the researcher should ‘give up the control of a fixed interview format and encourage greater equality in conversation’ as genuine discoveries about phenomenon can come from power sharing (Riessman, 2008). Creswell (2007) also defines narrative as a spoken or written text, which gives an account of an event/action or series of events/actions that are chronologically connected. According to Creswell, the procedures for carrying out narrative research involves focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences and chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences (pg. 54). Therefore, one of the main characteristics of narrative research is the collaboration process between the researcher and research participants. Altork (1998) explained that within the narrative approach, the participant is regarded as collaborator rather than informant guided by the agenda of the researcher.

In this qualitative research approach, stories of experiences are shaped through discussions with the participants in a dialogue. While there are different types of data collection methods such as field notes, journal records, interview transcripts, storytelling, pictures and so on that could be used as the researcher and participants work together in this collaborative dialogic relationship (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), data in this study was collected from participants’ stories. After collecting the data, I tried to make sense of it by interpreting the testimonies of the participants. Bruner (1990) explained that here,

the researcher looks to make meaning of the testimony provided by the participant. The researcher considers what the testimony provided means to the participant and how he or she can capture, interpret or make sense of that meaning is achieved. Consequently, narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008), where themes that emerge from the participants' responses provide a way for meaning to be captured, was considered as the method for data analysis.

In narrative thematic analysis, the transcripts of the interviews with study participants were first coded. While coding, trends or recurring patterns that reflected what the participants felt most strongly about were identified in the data. Commonalities between the codes led to the emergence of themes and De Vos (2005 pg.338) explained that identifying 'salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link the participants' is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavor'. The emerging themes were evaluated and interpreted. Theme analysis involved noticing how one participant's expression fitted into a chosen theme, while another might have indicated a divergence from the theme. Following the evaluation and interpretation of themes, recommendations were made. The recommendation focused on my considerations of how best to resolve the crisis in the Niger Delta and sustain peace in the region.

Following the approval of this study by the Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) and prior to the actual study, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study was to enable me to examine and reflect on the process, rephrase and review interview questions in preparation for the main study. Yin (2009) explained that the pilot test enabled the perfection of data collection plans and establish

appropriate questions for the interview. Kim (2011) also added that a pilot study in qualitative research was important as it helped the researcher pinpoint concerns that arose in order to alter or modify the method for the achievement of goals of the study. Consequently, the pilot test of this study was to help me realize my shortcomings in the process, correct them and prepare for the actual study.

Role of the Researcher

I was an observer-participant in this study and did not take part in the activities or event being studied (Salkind (2010). Being an observer-participant enabled me to develop a bond with the study participants (Agrosino, 2007, as cited in Creswell, 2013) and pay attention to how they give account of events or use language to communicate meaning, that is, make particular points to the audience (Riessman, 2008, pg. 11). With the permission of the participants, I also took notes during the interview and audio-recorded the discussions (Salkind, 2010). I ‘gave up the control of a fixed interview format and encouraged greater equality in conversation as genuine discoveries about phenomenon can come from power sharing’ (Riessman, 2008). The collaborative interviewing also eliminated a situation, where a participant kept back vital information from the researcher (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, as cited in Creswell, 2013). Follow up questions were asked where necessary during the interviews to allow the participants to expand their discussion and disclose more important information.

Researcher Bias

Reliability and validity of a study increases when the researcher is not biased (Salkind 2010). A researcher is biased when he or she is partial when considering an issue even though total objectivity in a study may be difficult when dealing with human

emotions. Yin (2014, pg.76) also highlighted that avoiding bias is but one facet of a broader set of values that falls under the rubric of ‘research ethics’. Therefore, to ensure that this study was as free from bias as possible, I sought to embrace the objectivity that it deserves. Being an indigene of the Niger Delta, I was conscious of my own biases. Consequently, I applied bracketing/epoche method, where I spent quality time recalling and noting down personal experiences, perceptions and opinion that I might have had about the subject of study and discard them before the commencement of interview sessions with participants. I also wrote down pitfalls to be aware off during the interview sessions and during the interviews, I gave undivided attention to participants’ stories. I interviewed participants with an open mind, ready to embrace new ideas and perspectives on the subject of study. I did not in any way lead participants to answer questions or provide answers for them.

Most importantly, I took time to prepare the interview questions and made them as objective as possible. The use of semi-structured interviews further helped in reducing the risk of interviewer’s bias (Mitchell & Jolley, 2009). My interview questions were loosely guided, semi-structured and open-ended to enable the participant discuss freely on the topic (See Appendix F). Furthermore, during the interview, I was patient with all the participants and respected each participant’s perception of the subject of study. With the permission of participants, I maintained a detailed record of all interviews and did not in any way alter the results from my data. Therefore, the outcome of the study was the result from the data I collected. To ensure the integrity of participants’ contributions, they were all invited to review material/data generated from the information they each provided.

The knowledge and skills I acquired in the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies also helped me to overcome the biases by being objective in the study. For instance, during the interview sessions with participants, I used my reflective listening skills that I learnt in the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies. This skill enabled me to pay utmost attention to participants' narratives and helped me to avoid the illusion of understanding their narratives (Katz, Lawyer and Sweedler, 1992). Where, participants' responses were not clear, I paraphrased succinctly for clarity (Bolton R, 1979).

Sampling and Sampling Criteria

It is worth noting that I purposefully targeted those that were very conversant with the subject of study and could best answer the interview questions. Therefore, I used 'purposeful sampling procedures' (Smith et al, 2009). This enabled the choice of participants, who were 'information-rich' and connected to the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2002, pg.20). Precisely, criterion sampling was used in the study. Criterion sampling was suitable here as all the participants were expected to have had experience of the phenomenon being studied and Creswell (2013, pg.158) stated that 'criterion sampling is useful for quality assurance'. Consequently, the participants targeted for the study were indigenes of oil communities in four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States) of Niger Delta, age 29 and above, born and raised to adulthood in the Niger Delta and mostly residents of Abuja. The choice for participants within the above-mentioned age bracket was because there was need for them to have a good recollection of history about the conflict and the amnesty program to be able to answer the questions regarding the subject of study. On the other hand, the choice for residents of Abuja was

because the site for the study was at Abuja. It was also for saving the cost of having to travel around all the four focused states in this study given the fact that the study was self-funded.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that the sample in this study ‘represents a perspective, rather than a population’ (Smith et al, 2009, pg.49). This is because the views of the 15 participants (2 to 5 people in each group) involved in the study may not represent the views of other people, who might fall under the same group with the participants or the views of the entire people of the Niger Delta given the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of the region. Smith et al also advised that the sample size should be small, about three to five participants from a group that will represent a perspective and not population.

Rationale for Deciding on Particular Group of Participants

In all, 15 participants from four different groups of indigenes were targeted. The targeted groups were the youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program. The rationale for deciding on these groups for the study was that as indigenes of oil communities in the Niger Delta and primary stakeholders in the conflict, they have an important role to play when it comes to resolving the conflict or sustaining peace in the region. They should not be ignored if there must be a way forward in resolving the conflict. Therefore, it was important that they were heard, and their opinions also considered if we are to move forward. This was why exploring their perspectives regarding the amnesty program was important especially when the position of the other stakeholders (the Federal Government and the Oil companies operating in the Niger Delta) were already known.

A lot has been written about the government's position on the amnesty program and the oil companies are believed to be in cohort with the government. This was why I chose to focus on exploring the perspectives of these groups of participants for their voices regarding the program to be equally heard. It was expected that the indigenes of the oil communities (study participants) would disclose important information on why peace could not be sustained in the region despite good government intervention programs such as the amnesty program and its benefits in terms of human development among others, for the region. It was also expected that the participants would honestly make important contributions and suggestions for considerations and resolution of the conflicts or the way forward.

Participants

The participant selection depended on the sampling criteria as earlier discussed. After the approval of this study by the IRB, I visited the Amnesty Office at Abuja to personally distribute flyers (see Appendix B) to potential participants among the youths and ex-militants, who were at the amnesty office for one thing or the other. The flyer contained the summary of what the study was about and called for volunteers for the study. Staff from the Amnesty Office also referred me to a lot of potential participants. Volunteers were given questionnaires to fill out. The questionnaire (see Appendix C) helped in determining the eligibility of participants for the study.

Fifteen (15) participants were identified, selected and interviewed in this study. All the participants met the criteria of inclusion in this study. As earlier explained, their eligibility for inclusion was determined after they completed the questionnaires provided by the researcher. From their responses in the questionnaire, the researcher was able to

determine their eligibility to participate in the study. Participants' age varied from 29 to 71 years old and they were selected to represent oil producing communities in four focused states in Niger Delta. The sample (participants) in the study 'represents a perspective rather than a population' (Smith et al. (2009, pg. 49).

Prior to selection of participants, I explained the purpose of the study to the potential participants and what would be expected of them in the study. I also let them know that participation was voluntary, therefore, no participant was pressurized into participation in the study. It is worth noting that after the recruitment of the 15 participants, they were given an opportunity to ask whatever question they wanted to ask about the study. They were also informed before and during the entire process that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to without fear of negative consequences. They were all provided with the address of the venue of the interview and contact number to call and schedule convenient dates and times for interview. Therefore, the interviews were held at the study participants' convenient date, time and venue.

Instrumentation

This study used semi-structured and open-ended questions in a one-on-one interview with participants, to discover their perceptions of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forwards. The researcher also used audio-tape recorder to record the interview discussions.

The interview questions were open-ended to give the participants freedom to voice their perceptions of the program and the way forward. Being one of the primary stakeholders in the Niger Delta crisis, the indigenes were important when it comes to conveying the truth about the program and what exactly could be done to establish a

lasting peace in the Niger Delta. To understand how the indigenes of the Niger Delta see the amnesty program, they must be allowed to tell their stories. According to Senehi (2000), in storytelling, the sole final authority is the storyteller. Consequently, the participants were very important in this study. Therefore, to study this phenomenon, the research used the narrative approach to gather data through the collection of stories of participants and this enabled the researcher to understand how each participant perceives the amnesty program, identifies why the program could not sustain peace in the region and also recommend ways to address the phenomenon in order to bring a sustainable peace to the region.

The following questions were asked during the interview:

1. First, tell me how you feel about the protracted nature of the Niger Delta conflicts.
2. Tell me the story of how you and your community perceive the amnesty program.
3. Do you think this is why the program could not sustain peace in the region? Tell me more.
4. Did you benefit from the program and if so, how?
5. Tell me how the program has benefitted other indigenes of the oil communities, who are affected by the conflicts but are not militants or ex-militants.
6. In your opinion, do you think the amnesty program could resolve the conflicts in the Niger Delta?
7. Is the amnesty program the best intervention approach for the conflicts in the region and why?
8. What exactly do you think is the way forward?

It is worth noting that the type of follow up questions asked by the researcher depended on the direction the participant took the interview. Therefore, the follow up questions depended on the response of the interviewee and at times the researcher would ask the participant to discuss more and in detail on an issue. For instance, the researcher had asked ‘Do you think this is why the program could not sustain peace in the region? Tell me more’. While the follow up question enabled the participant to reveal more information about the subject of study, it helped the researcher to have a better understanding of the subject of study and carry out an in-depth analysis of same.

As earlier mentioned, the focus of this study was on how the indigenes of the Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program and why the program was unable to sustain peace in the region. Four groups of participants, youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program participated in the study. The participants were all from oil communities in four states of the Niger Delta and they were all born and raised to adulthood in the region.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews using semi-structured and open-ended interview questions. To avoid losing focus, an interview guide (see Appendix H) was used. The interview guide helped me to ask pertinent questions that were relevant to the subject of study. The interview promoted discussion and allowed the participants to tell their stories by themselves (Smith et al, 2009) in their own way. The stories of their life experiences with regards to the conflict in the region and how they each perceived the amnesty program. The interview also enabled me to grasp what the participants thoughts were on the subject of study.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, a consent form (see Appendix D) was signed by each participant. Participation was voluntary and no participant was pressurized into participation in the study. They were all reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to without any negative consequence. However, I observed that all the participants were excited about the study and willing to narrate the story of how they each perceived the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region as well as make suggestions for the way forward. The participants were happy that their voices could be heard on the subject under study and a greater number of them wanted their names to be reflected in the study as well.

All participants were given the same semi-structured and open-ended interview questions. They were assured that the information gathered during the interview would be treated within academic ethical guidelines. Therefore, participants were able to share information freely without fear of intimidation. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and the interview was conducted between March and May 2019.

On the day of the interview and before the commencement of the interview, participants were provided with a consent form to sign and affirm their willingness to participate in the study. Enough information was gathered from the interviews of the participants and the data came from the participants' responses to questions during the interview. The information gathered from the various interviews were enough for analysis. To ensure the integrity of participants' contribution, they were all invited to review material/data generated from the information they each provided.

Participants were given N3,000.00 (\$10.00) for their time. However, most participants rejected the money on grounds that their participation was free as they were

so excited to be part of the study and in a way, contribute to the body of knowledge. Some participants, who rejected money were given body spray or a bottle of wine that was almost equivalent to ₦3,000.00 (\$10.00), for their time.

The data was collected by the researcher herself. The discussions were recorded on audio tape and transcribed after the interview by the researcher. The transcribed data was saved in a file created for the study on the researcher's password protected laptop. A copy of the data was also saved on a flash drive that was stored in a locked drawer. This made the data to be available for a re-analysis to increase reliability of the data.

The data was collected over a period of two months (March 25th -May 11th, 2019). The first interviews were completed in the second week of May 2019 and the second meeting for participants to review the text was three weeks after. The second meeting with the participants was to enable them to check the transcript of the interviews for accuracy. Participants exited the study after they were debriefed by the researcher. During the debriefing session with each participant, they were given an opportunity to ask for further clarification about the study if they so wish. The participants were informed that the findings/results of the study would enable recommendations, which could lead to reviews and reformulation of meaningful policies that will contribute to the resolution of conflict in the region. Participants were also reminded that they were welcome to contact the researcher if they had any concerns about the study.

Data Analysis.

Data analysis began with the transcription of the audiotape recorded interviews into text. Participants' utterances and pauses like 'hmmm, I mean, you know, so you see, and...and etc.' as well as statements that were off topic of discussion or not relevant to

the interview question asked, were expunged. Riessman (2008, pg.58) explained that 'messy' spoken language is transformed to make it easily readable. The expunged words were used as a journal to reflect on verbal and non-verbal reactions that were recorded during the interview (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006).

The transcription was later coded for analysis. 'In vivo' coding (Saldaña, J. 2009) method was used. I highlighted words, phrases, sentences or paragraph and code them based on the actual language of the participants. This method honors the participant's voice in the data. Smith et al (2009) described this initial coding as most detailed and time consuming.

Following the initial coding was the second coding, where axial coding method was used. This method involved looking for links and connections/relationship between the codes in order to merge them into clusters. Here, I linked and grouped similar codes into categories and sub-categories and provided common code for each category. Thereafter, selective coding, where one category was chosen to be the core category and relating other categories to it was done. The categorization of codes produces themes for analysis.

Thematic Analysis

The linking and grouping of similar codes into categories and sub-categories and provision of common code for each category was followed by thematic analysis of the data, where I searched for emerging themes from the codes and the data. The data were interpreted in light of thematic developed by the researcher (Riessman, 2008, pg.54) According to Riessman (2008, pg.53), in this method of data analysis, content is the exclusive focus. The researcher focuses on the content of the speech and interprets what

is said in interviews by assuming meanings for an utterance that any competent user of language would bring (pg. 59). The emerging themes were reviewed and analyzed in detail. This was done by the discussion of how participants' responses to the interview questions fit into themes. The discussion was supported with quotations from the original text, which helped to communicate meaning to readers.

Pilot Testing

Prior to the actual interview for the study, I undertook a pilot test for the research. This was to enable me to examine and reflect on the process, rephrase and review the interview questions. Yin (2009) explained that the pilot test enabled the perfection of data collection plans and establish appropriate questions for the interview. Kim (2011) also added that a pilot study in qualitative research was important as it helped the researcher pinpoint concerns that arose in order to alter or modify the method for the achievement of goals of the study. Consequently, the pilot test of this study was to help me realize my shortcomings in the process, correct them and prepare for the actual study.

Selection of Participants for the Pilot Study

Purposeful sampling approach was used to select participants for the pilot study. The potential participants were indigenes of oil communities in Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa States, born and raised to adulthood in the Niger Delta and reside in Abuja, Nigeria. A flyer containing the summary of the study was given to the potential participants. When they showed interest to participate in the study, a questionnaire was provided to them to fill. Their response in the questionnaire helped to confirm whether they were qualified for the study.

Two participants age 42 and 53 were selected based on the response they provided in the questionnaire. Apart from their responses in the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that they were conversant with the phenomenon being studied and were able to respond to the interview questions. It is worth noting that the two participants were also informed before and during the entire process that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to without fear of negative consequences. They were further provided with the address of the venue for the interview. However, the participants chose the venue of the interview that was convenient for them. Before the interview commenced, the participants signed the consent form to confirm their acceptance to participate in the study. Below is the demographics of participants in the pilot study as indicated in table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants in Pilot Phase

Participant	State of Origin	Youth	Militant	Ex-militant/Beneficiary	Elder/Community Leader
Participant A	Bayelsa State	Yes			
Participant B	Akwa Ibom State	Yes			

Interview Setting-Pilot Test

To ensure that the participants were comfortable, the interview, which was face-to-face and one-on-one with the participants, took place at a date, time and place that was convenient for the participants. As requested by the two participants, the interviews took place at the participant's residence (study room) and private garden respectively. The venues of the interviews were conducive for the interview as there were no distractions. The venue was also quiet for recording conversation (Creswell, 2007). The pilot study

took place in first week of March 2019 immediately after the researcher secured the IRB approval to embark on the study.

Instrumentation-Pilot Test

An interview guide (see Appendix G) developed by the researcher was used in an audio tape recorded, face -to-face and one-on-one interview with the participant during the pilot test. The guide helped the researcher to focus on the phenomenon being studied and to ensure that pertinent questions that were relevant to the study were asked during the interviews. The interview promoted discussion, which allowed the participants to tell their stories by themselves (Smith et al, 2009) and in their own way. It further gives the researcher an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and probe for additional information for a better understanding of participants' perceptions of the subject of study.

Procedure – Pilot Study

The procedure commenced with the distribution of the research flyer, which summarizes the study and its purpose, to potential participants. After indicating interest in the study, they were provided with questionnaire to fill. Their response in the questionnaire assisted the researcher to confirm whether they were qualified to participate in the study. Apart from their responses in the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that they were conversant with the phenomenon under study and able to respond to the interview questions. As earlier mentioned, the two participants were also informed before and during the entire process that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to without fear of negative consequences. The participants signed the consent form to confirm their acceptance to participate in the study before they were interviewed. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audiotape recorded.

The pilot test was important as it helped me to reflect on my experience and review my approach to the proposed interview process (Seidman, 1998).

Methodology – Pilot Study

Narrative approach of qualitative method was used in the pilot phase study of this research. Narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporarily organized (Riessman, 2008). The researcher's interest in this research was to answer the following questions:

Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?

Sub-Questions: How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program? How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program? How do the militants perceive the amnesty program? How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive the program?

Limitation of the Pilot Study

It was just a small sample of two participants from only two states out of the four focused states in this study. Therefore, the sample did not represent the focused states or the four different participant groups in the study and the interview questions may not have been worded clearly.

Findings and Results of the Pilot Study

The participants were excited to be part of the study as they discussed freely about how they perceived the amnesty program and why peace was not sustained in the region

as well as the way forward. They informed that they did not mind if their names were reflected in study as they were delighted about the opportunity given to them to air their views regarding the program and what is happening in the region. Most importantly, the rapport the researcher established with the participants enabled smooth process.

The pilot phase of this study was important as it enabled me to reflect on my experiences and revise my approach to the proposed interview process (Seidman, 1998). The interview guide helped me to remain focus on the phenomenon being studied and the follow up questions enabled the participants to expand their discussions and to reveal more information. Based on the positive results from the pilot study, the researcher was convinced that the instrument for data collection was perfect for the main study. It is worth mentioning here that the pilot phase of the study enabled me to build my confidence, interviewing skills and perfect the interview protocol (Kvale, 1996).

Main Study - Research Method and Design

The narrative approach of qualitative method used in the pilot phase study was also used in the main research. As stated earlier, narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporary organized (Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry is grounded in the study of a particular phenomenon and the analyst's interest is on how a speaker or writer assembles and sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning, that is, make particular points to an audience (Riessman, 2008, pg. 11). The choice of this method and approach was in consideration of the purpose of the study, which was that of exploring the perspective of participants about the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region.

Riessman (2008, pg.11) further explained that the researcher does not find narratives but participates in their creation (pg.21). Given an audio tape recorded, face - to-face and one-on-one interview with the participants in this research, narrative inquiry was an excellent approach for gathering and interpreting data for this study. This research was designed to answer the following questions:

Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?

Sub-Questions: How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program? How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program? How do the militants perceive the amnesty program? How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive it?

Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of the participants for this study just as was the case in the pilot test. The strategy employed in the selection of participants was criteria sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The participants were indigenes of oil communities in four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states) out of the nine states of the Niger Delta. They were age 29 and above, mostly residents of Abuja but born and raised to adulthood in the Niger Delta. Three of the participants were residents in their various communities of the focused states in the Niger Delta. The participants belonged to four different groups namely, youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program. Apart from participants responds to the study questionnaire, which qualified them for selection, the researcher also ensured that the participants selected were conversant with the study and could provide answers

to the research question. Consequently, all participants met the criteria for selection for participation in the study.

Setting and Demographics

Although there was an official venue for the interview for the study, the interviews were conducted at participants' date, time and place of convenience. The convenient venues of the interviews included participant's sitting room, study room, library and garden. These venues were all conducive for interviews and recording of same. Fifteen participants from four different groups (youths, Elders/Community leaders, militants and ex-militants) in oil communities of four states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) in the Niger Delta, took part in the research study. Their ages ranged from 29 to 71 years old.

Table 2

Participants' Demographic Profiles

Participant	State of Origin	Youth	Militant	Ex-Militant/ Beneficiary	Elder/Community Leader
Participant 1	Delta	Yes			
Participant 2	Delta	Yes			
Participant 3	Delta				Yes
Participant 4	Akwa Ibom				Yes
Participant 5	Akwa Ibom				Yes
Participant 6	Rivers				Yes
Participant 7			Yes		
Participant 8	Bayelsa	Yes			
Participant 9	Delta			Yes	
Participant 10	Akwa Ibom	Yes			
Participant 11	Rivers				Yes
Participant 12	Akwa Ibom	Yes			
Participant 13	Bayelsa		Yes		
Participant 14	Rivers		Yes		
Participant 15	Delta			Yes	

Instrument for Data Collection

Semi-structured and open-ended questions in a face-to-face and one-on-one interview with participants were used to discover their perceptions of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forwards. According to Riessman (2008), semi-structured interviews make it possible for the researcher to grasp what the participants' thoughts were on the subject of investigation. It also allows the participants to seriously think about the topic of study. The interview questions were open-ended to give the participants freedom to voice their perceptions of the program and the way forward. While the open-ended questions were developed from the research questions, the follow up questions depended on the response of the participants and the direction to which they took the discussion. The research also used audio-tape recorder to record the interview discussions. The responses of the participants to the interview questions formed the data for the study. The data were transcribed and analyzed. Numbers were assigned to participants during the interview. This enabled the researcher to follow up with the participants for them to confirm the accuracy of the data collected from them.

Interview guide (see Appendix H) was developed by the researcher to avoid loss of focus on the phenomenon being studied. However, the guide was not strictly followed. As mentioned earlier, some questions and follow up questions asked during the interview depended on the direction of the flow of the discussion. The interview was audiotape recorded and transcribed after the interview. The transcribed data was saved in a folder in the researcher's pass-worded laptop. A back up copy was also stored in a flash-drive and kept in a locked drawer in a room. Apart from enabling the transcription of the exact

words of the participants, the recorded interview discussions were important as they allowed the data to be re-analyzed to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The period for data collection lasted for almost three months. The first interview ended second week of May 2019 while the follow up interview with participants that allow for the reviewing of the text of the transcript for accuracy was three weeks after the interview. Debriefing was carried out at the conclusion of the interview. During the debriefing, participants were encouraged to asked for further clarification about the study. Participants were informed that the findings and results of the study would add to the available literatures on the amnesty program and Niger Delta issues. It could also impact on the country's policy making with regards to the Niger Delta region. They were welcomed to always contact the researcher if they have concerns about the research process and the study.

Data Collection

Data collection for the study commenced after approval to embark on the study was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Nova Southeastern University. The procedure for collecting data here was same (narrative inquiry approach) as in the pilot phase of this study. Once again, participants were informed before and during the entire process that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they chose to without fear of negative consequences. Although there was an official venue for interview for the study, the interviews were held at the study participants' date, time and place of convenience.

After participants received detailed information about the study, they filled and signed the Consent Form (see Appendix D) before the interview commenced. They were

all asked the same semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, which enabled them to discuss freely about how they perceived the amnesty program and why it did not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forward. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour and the data collected from the interview was transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were conducted between March and May 2019.

Transcription

All the 15 interviews were audio tape recorded, and manually transcribed word for word. To smooth the data for analysis and derive textural meaning, the transcription was followed by the removal of duplicated words, comments and pauses like ‘hmmm, yes- yes-yes, you see, you know, and...and, no no no’ etc. as well as statements that were off topic of discussion or not relevant to the interview question asked. As recommended in interviews, the expunged words and comments etc. were used as a journal to reflect on verbal and non-verbal reactions that occurred during the interviews (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006).

The transcription kept the data manageable as I was able to put them together or organized them in files (Creswell, 2007), which were stored in folders labelled Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc. in my personal passworded laptop. To back up the transcribed data, I also stored them in a flash drive, which I kept in a locked cupboard in my room. The transcription was followed by the reading and the re-reading of the transcribed data to make sense of the information and reflect on their meaning. The next stage was the coding of the data.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews with the 15 study participants were thematically analyzed. Merriam (1998, Pg.178) states that “Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation”. It transforms data into findings and brings order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Patton, 2002). The process of data analysis includes transcribing, coding, forming categories/ patterns and generating themes, where each stage involves much deliberation and recursion. Creswell (2007, pg. 151) provides a data analysis spiral, where the various stages feed into a loop of description, classification and interpretation. While going through the data analysis process, detailed description of what is discovered from the analysis will be provided and the emergent themes discussed.

Data Analysis – Thematic Method

Data analysis commenced with the transcription of the interviews after the data collected from the field were organized into files (Creswell, 2007). Every information provided by the participants on the topic and interview questions were considered as very important. This was followed by the reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to make sense of the information and reflect on their meaning. The initial coding of the data, which Smith et al (2009) described as most detail and time consuming was next. “In vivo’ coding method (Saldaña, J. 2009) was used as it allows the codes and concepts to be as close as possible to the participants’ own words and phrase. This coding method honors the participants’ voice (Saldaña, 2009, pg. 74).

Following the initial coding, the data was studied to see how the codes were linked. Similar codes were grouped into categories and sub-categories. While doing this, the data between the coding categories were compared to look for differences and similarities in perceptions among the various participants with regards to the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region.

From the categories and sub-categories emerges themes, which were reviewed and analyzed in detail. This was done by the discussion of how participants' responses to the interview questions fit into the themes. The discussion was supported with quotations from the original text of the interview, which helped to communicate meaning to readers. There was further discussion on the themes to show how they were connected to the proposed theories for the study.

Assumptions

It was assumed that access to participants including militants would not be a problem, given the fact that the researcher is also an indigene of Niger Delta, knows the culture and could speak some of the local languages.

Given the above, it was also assumed that participants would not just be willing to grant interviews but would cooperate and provide honest and in-depth information for the study because of what they stand to benefit in terms of letting their voices to be heard on the issue. Therefore, their honest responses were likely to determine the reliability of the data that were collected and the findings of the study.

Limitations

The limitation of the study is that the literature review section may not have covered all the available materials/literatures regarding the subject of study. Furthermore,

the target sample limited the indigenes' perceptions of the amnesty program to four (4) states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States) out of the nine states that make up the Niger Delta and it is possible that the inclusion of indigenes from other states of the Niger Delta, who also have knowledge of the subject of study could have added depth to the study. In addition, it is also possible that their perceptions of the subject of study would have allowed the validation of the responses of the study participants during the interviews, thereby making the findings of the study stronger.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues arise in all stages of the research process (Creswell, 2007) and narrative inquiries comply with legal and procedural aspects of ethics held by institutional research Board (IRB) Clandinin, D & Hubr, J (in Press). In addressing the issues of ethics in this study, the approval of IRB was sought before going to the field to collect data (see Appendix A). Approval for the interview site was also received from the relevant authorities (see Appendix F). Participants were provided with all the necessary information to enable them to make informed decisions regarding participation in the study. They were further informed before and during the process that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Informed Consent form (see Appendix D) was provided for participants to signed and confirm their willingness to participate in the study before the interview commenced.

A rapport was established to ensure that participants were comfortable during the interview. The interview was collaborative, and the researcher avoided asking participants leading questions. There was maximum attention with little interruptions on

the side of the researcher. The interruptions were done only when necessary e.g. when asking a follow up question or asking the participant for more explanations on an issue. The interview was audio recorded with the permission of the participants. To establish privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of participants and data, the participants were assigned numbers and their names were not used. Data collected were stored in a locked cabinet and the researcher's personal laptop used for the study had a password. The data and all relevant documents are still locked up and would be destroyed by shredding using shredding machine in three years after the study ended.

It is worth noting that to ensure confidentiality of information provided by participants, the data collected will only be shared with the members of the researcher's dissertation committee and the IRB. In data analysis, the language was simple and clear for the target audience and the texts of the interview was given to the respective participants to cross check for accuracy before the writing of the final report.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the research methodology and approach that was used in the research study. It also discussed the pilot phase of the study and the main study. The process of data collection and analysis, assumptions and limitations as well as ethical issues were also discussed. The following chapter will present the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. As earlier stated, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of the participants regarding the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the Niger Delta. This was with a view to recommending an improvement of the program or a better alternative intervention approach to address the conflict and sustain peace in the region. The study was guided by the following research question and sub-questions:

Main Research Question: How do people from the oil communities in the Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?

Sub-Questions:

1. How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?
2. How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program?
3. How do the militants in Niger Delta perceive the program?
4. How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive the program?

Coding of the Data

The reading and the re-reading of the transcripts of the interviews to make sense of the information in the data and have an idea of how patterns could be clustered and coded was followed by the coding of the data. A code in qualitative inquiry is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana 2016, Pg.4).

Coding on the other hand is a way of making and segmenting data by categorically referencing units of text like words, sentences, paragraphs, quotations and so on to reveal patterns and meaning (Gay et al 2006, McMillan et al, 2001). Riessman (2008) explained that coding is useful in narrative research especially, where long replies full of important information by participant are tagged, labeled or coded. It allows the researcher to get grips with the data or understand it.

First/Initial Coding

During the first round of coding, the transcripts of the interviews were coded using in vivo coding method. This method is appropriate for coding interview transcripts. It allows the codes or concepts to be as close as possible to the research participants' own words or phrase. It assigns codes to the data using words or short phrases taken from a section of the data. It honors the participants' voice (Saldana 2009, p. 74).

At this level of coding, I read and re-read the transcript of the interviews to look for key word, concepts and categories in the data, which will eventually form basic units of my analysis. I selected text in the transcript and gave it a code name that captures the essence of the text and the next time I come across a text with same meaning, I gave it the same code name.

Second Level Coding

In order to consolidate the codes, the initial/first level coding was followed by the second level coding, where axial coding method was used. This method of coding involves identifying relationships between codes to see how they could be merged into clusters. At this stage, I went through the data again to see how the codes that were derived during the first level coding could be linked and grouped into categories with a

common name for each category. This also helped a great deal in reducing the size of the data.

Similar codes from all participant groups' response to interview questions regarding reasons behind the conflict were grouped under a common code called category. The same thing was done for participant groups' response to the interview questions regarding their perceptions of the amnesty program and the way forward respectively. While analyzing or sorting the codes into categories, I also compare data between the coding categories across the different participant groups for emerging themes. The emerging themes in the data were detected. Therefore, the categorization of codes reflects themes.

The second level coding is presented in table 3, where it shows columns for the research question/interview questions (which covers participants' overview of the conflict, perception of the amnesty program and the way forward), participants (youths, militants, ex-militants/beneficiaries, elders/community leaders), second level code and categories. This revealed the ways in which the research questions, interview questions, codes and categories all relate to each other.

Please See table 3 on next page:

Table 3

Second Level Coding and Categorization

Main Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?	Participants	Second Level Code	Categories
Interview questions regarding the overview of the conflict	<p>Youths:</p> <p>Militants:</p> <p>Ex-Militants:</p> <p>Elders/community leaders:</p>	<p>Unemployment. Marginalization. Frustration. Environmental devastation. Poverty. Underdevelopment. Negligence. Corruption. Loss of lives.</p> <p>Policy failure. Frustration. Destruction of lives and properties. Environmental degradation. Underdevelopment. Victimization Marginalization.</p> <p>Underdevelopment. Destruction of lives and properties. Negligence. Frustration. Deprivation. Environmental degradation.</p> <p>Policy failure. Underdevelopment. Environmental degradation. Deprivation.</p>	<p>Underdevelopment. Marginalization. Destruction of lives and properties. Policy failure. Corruption. Environmental degradation. Frustration.</p>

		Frustration. Exploitation. Injustice.	
Interview questions regarding perception of the amnesty program.	<p>Youths:</p> <p>Militants:</p> <p>Ex-Militants:</p> <p>Elders/Community Leaders</p>	<p>Exploitation. Policy failure. Good intention. Corruption. Wrong beneficiaries. Frustration. Poor management. Hijacked by cabals. Generate crisis.</p> <p>Hijacked by cabals. Wrong beneficiaries. Policy misplacement. Failure of policy. Compensation for taking arms. Masses are neglected. Proliferation of arms. Corruption. Continuous depravation.</p> <p>Wrong beneficiaries. Wrong policies. Misplacement of priority. Good intention. Insincerity of government. Underdevelopment in the region.</p> <p>Misplaced priority. Failed policy. Underdevelopment. Poor management. Exploitations. Corruption. Proliferations of armed groups. Anti-masses policy. Wrong beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Policy failure.</p> <p>Wrong beneficiaries.</p> <p>Corruption.</p> <p>Poor management.</p> <p>Policy misplacement.</p> <p>Proliferation of armed groups.</p> <p>Underdevelopment.</p> <p>Discriminatory policy.</p> <p>Exploitation.</p> <p>Good intention.</p>

Interview questions on way forward	Youths:	Restructuring. Resource control. Companies' Headquarters relocation to oil producing region. Development of the region. Corporate Social Responsibility. Adequate compensations. All-inclusive policy. Tackling corruption. Environmental protection.	Fiscal federalism. Corporate social responsibility. Environmental protection. Holistic development. Policy inclusiveness. Relocating companies' headquarters. Transparency.
	Militants:	Employment. Holistic development. Resource control. Restructuring.	
	Ex-Militants:	Development. Policy monitoring. Restructuring. Resource control.	
	Elders/Community Leaders:	Employment. Environmental sanitation. Fiscal federalism. Policy monitoring. Transparency. Development of the region. Policy inclusiveness. Referendum.	

Categorization and the Generating of Themes

Following the second level coding, was selective coding, where one category was chosen to be the core category and relating all other categories to that category. This involved “winnowing the data and reducing it to small, manageable set of themes to write

into final narratives”. In this final process, one major theme and four sub-themes were created. With great narratives created from the themes, the messy qualitative data became meaningful. Table 4 below shows the categories that were derived from the second level coding and the emerging themes.

Table 4

Categorization and the Generating of Themes

Main Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?	Categories:	Theme:
Interview question regarding the conflict	Underdevelopment. Marginalization. Destruction of lives and properties. Policy failure. Corruption. Environmental degradation. Frustration.	Underdevelopment of the region.
Interview questions regarding perception of the amnesty program.	Policy failure. Wrong beneficiaries. Corruption. Poor management. Policy misplacement. Proliferation of armed groups. Underdevelopment. Discriminatory policy. Exploitation. Good intention.	POLICY FAILURE. Wrong beneficiaries. Corruption. Proliferation of armed groups. Underdevelopment.
Interview questions on way forward	Fiscal federalism. Corporate social responsibility. Environmental protection. Holistic development. Policy inclusiveness. Relocating companies' headquarters. Transparency.	Fiscal federalism

It is important to note that while the purpose of the study was to explore participants' perceptions of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the Niger Delta, participants' views regarding the conflict and the way forward were also sought during the interviews to enhance a better understanding of how they all perceived the amnesty program. Their responses to the interview questions regarding the conflicts and the way forward were equally transcribed and coded and similar codes grouped to form categories alongside with their responses to the interview questions regarding their perceptions of the amnesty program (the main focus of the study) as reflected in table 4. However, based on the focus of the study, themes for the analysis in this study were generated only from the codes and categories that were derived from participant groups' responses to the interview questions regarding their perceptions of the amnesty program as reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

Generating of Themes

Main Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?	Categories:	Theme:
Youths-----> Militants-----> Ex-militants/beneficiaries of the program-----> Elders/community leaders----->	Policy failure. Wrong beneficiaries. Corruption. Poor management. Policy misplacement. Proliferation of armed groups. Underdevelopment. Discriminatory policy. Exploitation. Good intention.	Main theme POLICY FAILURE Sub-themes Wrong beneficiaries (sub-theme) Corruption. Proliferation of armed groups. Underdevelopment.

Themes

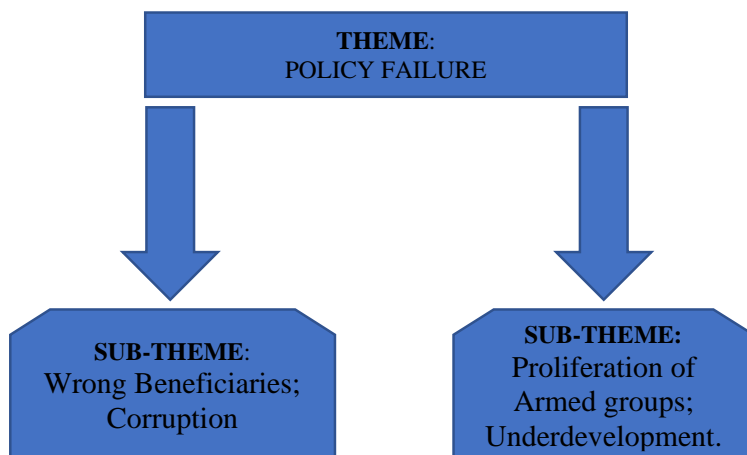
To generate the themes for this study, the transcripts of the interviews conducted for the 15 study participants were coded and to consolidate the codes, the initial or first level coding was followed by the second level coding, where similar codes were linked and given common code. Thereafter, similar codes were further linked and grouped into categories with a common name for each category. As earlier mentioned, the themes for analysis in this study were only generated from the categories derived from the participants responses to the interview questions regarding how they perceive the amnesty program (see Table 5) as this was the focus of the paper.

From the categories, only one major theme and four different sub-themes emerged. The major theme that emerged was ‘policy failure’ and under this theme, were the following sub-themes, ‘wrong beneficiaries, corruption, proliferation of armed groups and underdevelopment’. This is captured in the diagram in Figure 1.

It is pertinent to note here that, to be considered as a theme or sub-theme, there must be commonalities in responses of at least two or three participants. The commonality that was established was based upon the entire text as captured in the codes and categories.

Please see Figure 1 on next page:

Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes



After the theme and the sub-themes were generated, the thematic analysis was done. This involved a discussion of the theme and the sub-themes. Quotes from participants and participant groups were used to show how their replies or responses to the interview questions fit into the theme and the sub-themes. The discussion of the theme and the sub-themes are shown below.

Main theme: Policy Failure

At the process of gathering opinions during the interviews, some of the participants believed that the government of late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua had good intentions for the people in the oil producing region. They felt the policy was unprecedented as it was formulated to pave way for the provision of succor in terms of the development of the long-neglected region for the people of Niger Delta, who have been victims of the hazards from oil exploration.

Prior to the establishment of the amnesty program, the Federal Government used 'stick approach' to relate with the militants in the creeks. Instead of having a solution from the barrels of gun, the conflicts between the militants and the Nigeria Government

became aggravated. The region became so volatile to the extent that the oil companies could not operate without protection by the government's military forces. The bombings and vandalisms of oil pipeline reduced the oil production in Nigeria to the barest minimum until the regime of late President Yar'Adua acknowledged that the use of stick approach was capable of grounding Nigeria economically. This is because Nigeria, a mono-economic country, depended largely on the revenue from oil production in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the regime opted for a carrot approach in the form of empowerment and inclusiveness. The policy (amnesty program) was formulated in such a way that only the militants that were willing to surrender their arms would benefit from it.

According to the narratives of the study participants, from the onset, the policy was set for failure because it excludes the larger population of children, youths and even aged people, who were not carrying guns but were also victims of the hazardous activities of the foreign oil companies, whose existence was only for profit making and benefits to their home countries. Apart from being poorly formulated, the policy was also abysmally managed at the level of implementation. It was hijacked by the elites to meet objectives separate from the real objectives that it was created for. Although the policy enjoyed temporary success at the initial stage as many militants came out of the creeks to surrender their weapons and embrace dialogue, at the long run, because it could not bring the succor that was promised, which was the development of the region while there was a conducive environment created as a result of the surrendering of weapons by militants, the amnesty program failed. Consequently, militancy and related activities in the region

continue to this present day as new militant groups keep on emerging. Therefore, the amnesty program failed to halt militancy in the region.

From the above discussion, which was based on the narratives of participants, it has been established that the amnesty program was poorly formulated and implemented. The program could not provide solutions to plethora of problems that have been facing the region for decades and its policy was exclusively meant to benefit only the youths that have decided to carry weapons against the government and not the larger population of the region. Apart from benefiting the militants, amnesty program mostly benefited the Federal Government and the oil companies, who took advantage of the temporary peace that was created to increase oil production and profits. The excerpts below fit in with the theme, policy failure.

Table 6

Excerpts on Policy Failure

Participant	Quotation
Participant 1 (Youth)	“The program came but it’s not working or being implemented the way it was planned. One thing is saying it, and another is implementing it. Most of the things they say they will do they are not doing it”
Participant 3 (Elder/community leader)	“But has it been able to achieve the purpose of its creation? This is where I have an issue. What has the government, the authorities done to ensure that the program meets its target or achieve its objectives? Yes, I feel and very strongly so that the amnesty program has not achieved its objectives. And rather...why has it not been able to achieve its objectives? The amnesty program is poorly conceived in the first instance”
Participant 5 (Elder/community leader)	“I believe that the amnesty program of the government is one of its programs that is very successful. However, the problem is implementation. Just like it happens to every other policies of government”
Participant 6 (Elder/community leader)	“So good intentions as the amnesty program was thought to be, it was obvious from the beginning that something was wrong”
Participant 7 (Militant)	“... the crisis will continue. The program does not work”
Participant 10 (Youth)	“As far as I am concerned, the amnesty program does not work because there is no sincere effort to supervise it. If there is good supervision, it would have at least worked to some extent”

Participant 11 (Elder/community leader)	“... as long as they don’t address the reason why people carry arms, agitate...and you want to address the carrying of the arms, you won’t succeed”
Participant 12 (Youth)	“As I am speaking now, we still have militants in the creeks. We still have a lot of boys in the creeks, which confirms that there are not happy with the Federal Government and the program. So, we cannot say it has succeeded. It has not...greater percentage of the militants and the people of the Niger Delta already know that the program is a failure” “As I speak, in Ibeno, where I come from...we still have a lot of problems... So, I will also confess to you that the amnesty program is a failure. A complete failure because it has not done up to 30% and 30% to 45% is a failure”
Participant 14 (Militant)	“The government reneged in its commitments. This (development of the region) would have been the last lap of it. Those that were caught in the crossfire have been neglected. People that lost loved ones, properties, everything, they have been neglected till date. And the government is moving around telling people that the amnesty program is a success....”

Sub-Themes

Sub-theme 1: Wrong Beneficiaries

Even with the limited scope of beneficiaries, the policy was still unable to reach most of the people it was meant for. These were the militants that have held the economy on hostage, although, to enjoy the benefits offered by the amnesty program, there were conditionalities. The major condition given by the government was for the militants to embrace dialogue and surrender their weapons to the government.

However, many non-militants were enrolled as beneficiaries of the amnesty program and even those that were not indigenes of the oil producing communities also benefitted. They used undue influences in order to enjoy a policy that was never meant for them. Many militants were not captured at the process or selected to benefit from the program because they did not have the favor from the political and traditional elites in the region. Therefore, the policy was diverted to be a rewarding mechanism for the loyal servants of some of the powerful politicians and elites. According to narratives of some participants during the interview sessions, politicians hijacked the program and used it to

compensate the militants and youths, who helped to rig elections for them to get into political offices. Consequently, the ex-militants, who could not benefit from the program are back to the creeks.

Table 7

Excerpts on Wrong Beneficiaries

Participant	Quotation
Participant 2 (youth)	“It is based on who you know. Most of the beneficiaries of the program are not even those who have carried arms and have been in the creeks. Hence, there is a lot of bitterness because those who are supposed to benefits are not benefitting and those who are not militants or ex-militants were benefitting”
Participant 3 (Elder/community leader)	“I do not know of any youth in Ibeno in particular, where I come from that has benefitted from the amnesty program. ...I have also been reliably informed that people from non-oil producing communities are benefitting from the Amnesty program”
Participant 7 (Militant)	“People that have never fought are part of the program. People outside the Niger Delta are brought into the program thereby denying the actual people that were to benefit. In fact, about 35% of the beneficiaries of amnesty program are not from Niger Delta region. Therefore, the crisis will continue. The program does not work”
Participant 8 (youth)	“The reason why we still have ongoing crisis is because those who are supposed to benefit from the program are not benefitting while those benefitting are not supposed to...”
Participant 9 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	“There are some who did not carry arms and are taking the benefits of those who carried arms....”
Participant 10 (youth)	“Some people who participate in the amnesty program are not even from oil communities. You see, ...this issue came up. It came up and we discovered that Akwa Ibom slot was seized by.... He seized it and handed the slot to people from Ondo state because he was from that axis”

Sub-theme 2: Corruption

Corruption as an act of using official position to acquire undue benefits got rooted at the process of implementing the amnesty program. It became competitive and lucrative to get an institutional position in any agency related to amnesty program. The study participants lamented that many funds were diverted into private accounts by the people

that spearhead the implementation of the program. The consequence was that the benefits meant for some of the beneficiaries were either reduced or totally denied.

Corruption within the amnesty program was not only monetary. Some actions and conducts of the government officials in charge of the execution of the policy were against the norms and objectives of the program. The officials enlisted their friends, family members and allies in the scheme at the expense of the people that were the major target of the program. The worst aspect of it all was that, people were paying to get enlisted in the policy scheme. Therefore, the vision and mission died in corruption.

Table 8

Excerpts on Corruption

Participant	Quotation
Participant 2 (youth)	“...the poorer indigenes are even asked to pay some money to be shortlisted for the program. Children of the poor are not allowed to participate. Right now, there is ongoing crisis”
Participant 4 (Elder/community leader)	“But there was a problem. We saw that those who were to coordinate the program took advantage of it to enrich themselves. They were sons and daughters of the area. They used the opportunity to enrich themselves and immediate families. They even have investment outside the country. ...the process of receiving the amnesty was corrupted. There wasn't any clear-cut criteria for selection because the government relied on militant group leaders, who were not sincere. ...they should desist from the selling of vacancies for the program because this is where the staff are also being corrupt”
Participant 7 (Militant)	“...it has been hijacked by 99% of politicians in the region, who see the program as a form of settlement for them. They convert the amnesty program to be political settlement. Those who suffered for them and help rig elections to ensure that they win are the ones the politicians will include in the program. The ones they will recommend to the amnesty office.... Before you benefit as an ex-militant, you must be a politician's boy and work for that politician. The politicians are their godfathers and mothers, therefore, even as an ex-militant, you must have a politician godfather or mother to benefit from the program. The politicians are the ones to recommend you for the program. If you don't have a godfather or mother, then you cannot be recommended”
Participant 8 (youth)	...it was hijacked by our Niger Delta politicians. ...and hijacked the program for relatives, who do not even know about freedom fighting. For relatives, who were not militants and so every person who wanted his or her siblings

	<p>or family members to go to school abroad ensured that they went under the program. The focus was no more on freedom fighters. Some of these people, who hijacked the program are even those who are well to do but capitalized on the program to shift responsibility away from them. This makes the amnesty program to no effect”</p> <p>“...our Chiefs, traditional rulers are all corrupt. They have been bought off. Before you even benefit from the amnesty program, you must have a godfather to recommend you and, in most cases, you pay them for the recommendation. At the end of the day, the aim of the program is not successful”</p>
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Sub-theme 3: Proliferation of Armed Groups

The amnesty program was initiated to only cater for the interest of the militants in Niger Delta, who willingly surrendered their weapons to the government. Therefore, a greater number of youths, who were still doing their legitimate businesses cum traditional businesses of fishing and farming felt excluded especially given the fact that there were no longer enough fishes in the water and their farms no longer yield good harvest due to water pollution and environmental devastation respectively as a result of the activities of the oil companies. Most of these youths now saw that it was much more rewarding to be a dissident than to be a conformist. This resulted in the emergence of different splinter groups of militancy in the region, where they were all competing to get the attention of the government and also get paid like their forerunners.

Consequently, the amnesty program seems to be creating more problems in the region as the proliferation of both armed and deadly ammunitions became the order of the day. This further pose great threats to the stability of the region because the more rewarding militancy activities seem to be, the more unemployed youths engage in these confrontational businesses that were inimical to the general existences of the people in the region and Nigeria at large.

With the proliferations of armed men and ammunitions, criminality became the order of the day as armed robbery and cultism continue to soar higher in the region. Furthermore, as importation of weapons increases in the region due to militancy and criminal activities, it is bound to extend to other parts of Nigeria.

Table 9

Excerpts on Proliferation of Armed Groups

Participant	Quotation
Participant 6 (Elder/community leader)	<p>“It was a clear reward for armed struggle, which sent the wrong message even to the communities in the oil producing areas that those persons, who have been into dialogue, discussions, negotiations, adopted the right approach. That was the message they got and that such was right. And so, we are now dealing with the generation of uneducated, half educated, school dropout, who have access to arms and were able to force the Federal Government into submission by blowing down oil pipelines reducing Nigeria’s oil explorations and exports”</p> <p>“So, we still have men and women with arms, who now get paid at the end of the month. That is like the Federal Government is actually helping some people to maintain a private army”</p>
Participant 8 (youth)	They see the program as a means of business to make money. So, it is no longer freedom fighting but personal and criminal. To make money from the government”
Participant 9 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	“...let me tell you, the pockets of violent carried out today is done by those who have heard about the benefits of the program and did not benefit from it”
Participant 14 (Militant)	<p>“And today, it is also an incentive for people to perpetrate crime because anybody even a criminal that wants to take up arms today would hide under the deprivation of Niger Delta... and take up arms and agitate on behalf of the people so that the government will give attention to him or her or their group. When attention is now being given, they would commercialize it, make so much money and the government., they have shown...they have shown willingness that they are ready to compensate as much number of persons that will raise up arms against the government. As long as you could show a clear-cut strength that you are capable to stand against the government, they will bring you in and involve you in the process and carry you along. That alone has also created proliferation of sprinter groups. Now, we have all forms of groups, all forms of names, all in the guise of seeking an attention from the government and for them to be included into the general share of oil resources”</p>

Sub-theme 4: Underdevelopment

The reason for initiating the amnesty program was to create conducive atmosphere for the development of the region. This was because what led to militancy initially were series of problems confronting the oil rich region. The problems include but not limited to poverty, unemployment, lack of basic infrastructures/social amenities, inequality, heavy water pollution, environmental degradation, lack of access to basic education, marginalization of the Niger Delta people, and other difficulties experienced by them.

After so many years of implementing the amnesty program (from June 2009 till now), the problem of underdevelopment persists in the region. Instead of having a gradual or total departure from the causes that led to the agitations, the region continues to experience various levels of setback that leads to continuous agitations of different degrees by the people of the region. They are now demanding for resource control because they feel their resources should be used primarily to develop their region, which over the years, the reverse has been the case. The region is considered as the least developed region in the country even when it has abundant of resources that run the budget of the entire country. The Niger Delta people feel sidelined and marginalized from the mainstream governance of the nation. Given all of these, the amnesty program can never bring about absolute serenity in the region.

Table 10

Excerpts on Underdevelopment

Participant	Quotation
Participant 10 (youth)	“...the so-called intervention programs by the government is to calm the youths in the Niger Delta and allow the Federal Government and oil companies continued access to oil. Development of the region is not in its agenda and the government is never sincere about it”
Participant 11 (Elder/community leader)	“... have promised to develop the Niger Delta and have not been able to develop the Niger Delta. We have to ask what really is wrong because something is really wrong. The will has never been there politically, to develop the Niger Delta by the Nigerian state” “...when you look at it from that perspective, then, the Niger Delta itself has not benefitted in any way when it comes to development and which was the issue because up till now the Niger Delta has not been developed”
Participant 12 (youth)	“As I speak, they are not happy because the amnesty program, we now see it as if it was a monkey program to lure some people and calm their nerves just for the Federal Government to continue to access the oil and have a free flow from drilling, leaving the oil communities and the Niger Delta unattended to, undeveloped”
Participant 13 (Militant)	“As I speak to you, the Niger Delta is the most underdeveloped region in the whole of Nigeria. Even though it is the fat cow that is feeding the entire Nigeria” “As I speak to you, there is no pipe borne water, no road and all of that in the Niger Delta. But resources from the Niger Delta is used to develop other parts of the country”
Participant 14 (Militant)	“The boys were rehabilitated and integrated into the society but the last part of it, which is development, the government has played politics with it and has refused to develop the region because, it has never wanted to develop the region” “We kept our own bargain, there was peace in the region. But the government reneged from theirs and till date, they have not developed the region” “The next phase that should have addressed the fundamental issues in the crisis, development etc. has not been looked into. They succeeded in disarming the boys but because they have not addressed the underlying issues/root causes of the Niger Delta problems, people continue to carry arms and presently, there are new groups in the creeks seeking for attention”
Participant 15 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	“...part of the agreement was that the region will be developed. Now, the amnesty has taken care of one vital aspect, which is catering for 30,000 persons and giving them monthly stipends. The amnesty program is what brought about the little peace in the region for now...but the other aspect of infrastructural development, which should be taken care of by the NDDC and Ministry of Niger Delta...the region is still not developed. There is no electricity in most of our villages, no road network, no healthcare facilities etc. In my clan, there is no electricity”

Connecting Theme and Sub-themes to Proposed Theories

As already noted, one major theme and four sub-themes recur in the data for this study. The major theme was ‘policy failure’ and the following four sub-themes, ‘wrong beneficiaries, corruption, proliferation of armed groups and underdevelopment’.

Main Theme: Policy Failure

The main theme, policy failure, could be connected to Burton’s theory of human needs, where Burton had explained that conflict is inevitable when social and political institutions fail to fulfill what he described as non-negotiable ontological human needs. The theme recurs in the narratives of all participants/participant groups. Participants’ narratives during the interviews revealed that the amnesty program failed because the major objective of the program was not achieved. They all stated that the development of the region and provision of basic needs as well as resource ownership and control were what they negotiated for under the amnesty program and that the program was established to create an enabling environment of peace to allow the government to develop the region and address other related issues that led to agitations and armed struggle.

They disclosed that while the Niger Delta people fulfilled their part of the bargain by the surrendering of weapons by the militants, the government reneged on its side of the bargain, which among other things, was the development of the region. Its focus and that of the oil companies was on continuous access to oil/other resources of the region and how to maximize the OPEC approved allocation to Nigeria, which was about 2.2 million barrels per day and the development of the region was ignored. This created problems in the amnesty program and made it unsuccessful as new militant groups

continue to emerge. The Niger Delta people could not really trust the government anymore. For the participants, until the region is developed and their needs in the region met, agitations and militancy will continue. This confirms what Burton said in his theory of human needs that conflict is inevitable when social and political institutions fail to fulfill what he described as non-negotiable ontological human needs, which include development, security, and recognition and identity (Ramsbotham & Woodhouse & Miall, 2011). Below are some excerpts from participants' stories during the interviews that support this analysis.

Table 11

Excerpts Connecting Policy Failure to Proposed Theories

Participant	Quotation
Participant 11 (Elder/community leader)	"... as long as they don't address the reason why people carry arms, agitate...and you want to address the carrying of the arms, you won't succeed"
Participant 12 (youth)	"As I am speaking now, we still have militants in the creeks. ..., which confirms that there are not happy with the Federal Government and the program. So, we cannot say it has succeeded. It has not...greater percentage of the militants and the people of the Niger Delta already know that the program is a failure"
Participant 14 (Militant)	"The next phase that should have addressed the fundamental issues in the crisis, development etc. has not been looked into. They succeeded in disarming the boys but because they have not addressed the underlying issues/root causes of the Niger Delta problems, people continue to carry arms and presently, there are new groups in the creeks seeking for attention"
Participant 15 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	"...part of the agreement was that the region will be developed. The amnesty program is what brought about the little peace in the region for now...but...the region is still not developed. There is no electricity in most of our villages, no road network, no healthcare facilities etc. In my clan, there is no electricity"

Sub-Theme: Wrong Beneficiaries

This sub-theme confirms what the theory of relative deprivation says about an experience of being deprived of something to which one thinks he or she is entitled to (Walker & Smith, 2001) that often leads to conflict. In this theory, Gurr explained that tension develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence' (1971:23). The amnesty program was exclusively meant to benefit only the youths that had carried weapons against the government, who have decided to embrace dialogue and surrender their weapons. However, the narratives of participants revealed that even with the limited scope of beneficiaries, the program was still unable to reach most of the people it was meant for. The politicians used the policy to compensate their allies and family members. Many non-militants and even those that were not indigenes of the oil producing communities were enrolled as beneficiaries. They used undue influences to enjoy a policy that was never meant for them.

Furthermore, many militants were not captured at the process especially in the phase two of it because they didn't have the favor from the political and traditional elites in the region. Participants' disclosed that the policy was diverted and turned into a rewarding mechanism for the loyal servants of some of the powerful politicians in the region. Therefore, the militants, who were among those that surrendered their arms and were not enlisted in the later phase of the program were aggrieved. They felt that they were being denied of their rightful benefits and so continued in armed struggle and agitation to get the attention of the government. With wrong beneficiaries, the policy has deprived the people once again and the agitations and conflicts would continue to persist

until the right people for the program (ex-militants) are identified and settled. These are the issues that contributes to the failure of the program. The excerpts below support this analysis.

Table 12

Excerpts Connecting Wrong Beneficiaries to Proposed Theories

Participant	Quote
Participant 2 (youth)	“There is cabal in the program and no clear-cut criteria for selection. It is based on who you know. Most of the beneficiaries of the program are not even those who have carried arms and have been in the creeks. Hence, there is a lot of bitterness because those who are supposed to benefit are not benefitting and those who are not militants or ex-militants were benefitting. ...the poorer indigenes are even asked to pay some money to be shortlisted for the program. Children of the poor are not allowed to participate. Right now, there is ongoing crisis. The amnesty programs bring a lot of enmity between families and communities...”
Participant 3 (Elder/community leader)	“...I have also been reliably informed that people from non-oil producing communities are benefitting from the amnesty program”
Participant 7 (Militant)	“...about 35% of the beneficiaries of amnesty program are not from Niger Delta region. Therefore, the crisis will continue. The program does not work”
Participant 8 (youth)	“The reason why we still have ongoing crisis is because those who are supposed to benefit from the program are not benefitting while those benefitting are not supposed to...”
Participant 9 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	“There are some who did not carry arms and are taking the benefits of those who carried arms....”

Sub-Theme: Under-development

This sub-theme could be connected to Galtung’s theory of structural violence. The theory informed of the use of established institutions like the social, political, educational, religious, judicial, and scientific arrangements to justify targeted discrimination against any individuals, or groups in the society (Galtung, 1969). It explores how political, economic and cultural structures result in the occurrence of avoidable violence, most commonly seen as results of deprivation of basic human needs.

Galtung blamed structural violence for the inability of people to benefit from economic, political and cultural structures especially when some classes or groups in the society have easy access to resources and opportunities and others are denied access to same.

A closer look at the narratives of the participants in this study revealed that one of the main reasons why the amnesty program was not successful is because the Government refused to develop the region despite agreement that led to the establishment of the program. The agreement was for the people to give peace a chance to enable a conducive environment for the government to move in and begin to solve the problems that brought agitations and armed struggle in the Niger Delta. The people carried out their side of the bargain, surrendered their arms and embraced dialogue with the government. This ushered in the little peace that was felt in the region. However, since 2009 when the people willingly got disarmed till now, the government has done nothing to develop the region. Therefore, the people felt the government has never been serious about the development of the region. They are bitter and feel the government has taken them for granted.

To some of them, the program and its benefits in terms of human development enjoyed by the few beneficiaries look as if it was a bribe to the people to calm them and allow the government and the oil companies to continue in exploiting them. While the government is developing other regions from the resources of the Niger Delta, the people of the region are being denied basic things like infrastructural facilities and social amenities. The Niger Delta sometimes looks like outskirts of Nigeria as it has the lowest level of development and the unemployment level is high, poverty level is higher too compared to other regions in the country. There is a great discrepancy between people in

the city and people in the creek. Therefore, it became like an institutionalized marginalization as attempt by the government to use amnesty program to create enabling environment of peace and security for the development of region also failed. The policy did not reduce poverty in the region or unemployment and inequality continues to widen. These also account for reasons why the people continue to agitate for the region to be developed. The Niger Delta region remains the least develop region in the country and its people continue to wallow in abject poverty in the midst of abundance whereas other regions and its people are living a life of opulence from its resources.

The few that benefitted from the amnesty program by getting trained in various skills could not even practice their acquired skills because the enabling environment in terms of relevant infrastructures to help them practice their skills are not there. After their trainings and skills acquisition, they go back to their impoverished environment, where things seem not to work. Therefore, despite the amnesty program and its “so called” benefits, some people refused to embrace dialogue as they could no longer trust the government to keep its words. The people have sworn that until the government do the needful, which include but not limited to total development of the region, using its resources, agitations and arm struggle will continue. Hence the continuous emergence of new militant groups in the region thereby making the amnesty program unsuccessful.

The above analysis agrees with the theory of structural violence and the excerpts below supports it.

Table 13

Excerpts Connecting Underdevelopment to Proposed Theories

Participant	Quote
Participant 3 (Elder/community leader)	“Most of our youths are engaged in skills, which the amnesty has brought to play but those skills are not enduring and sustaining. They don’t last for long. We do not have the enabling environment and infrastructure to sustain those skills. This is where the problem is. They can’t stand the test of time because the environment does not enable them to sustain the skills. We don’t have electricity, no good road, no portable water. How will they cope with skills acquired from the so-called amnesty programs?”
Participant 10 (Youth)	” If the Federal Government is sincere, all the Niger Delta region that own the oil is supposed to be developed. It is not at this time that they should be crying for the commonest thing like pipe borne water. If you come to these communities that own this oil, what you see is hardship, poverty, mud houses, thatch houses. But when you go to places like Abuja, this is where you find skyscrapers, excellent road network...six lane roads, so, you can imagine how individuals who are from these oil communities feel. Their environment has been completely depleted. They live in polluted environment but when you go to Abuja, you find very conducive, cool and beautiful environment. Who will be happy? Nobody from this oil region will be happy. So, these are some of the things that have been happening in the Niger Delta. They grace the front page of national dailies and international dailies. These are some of the things that they are suffering from. These are some of the things that the like of Ken Saro-Wiwa was killed because they made the whole world to understand what was happening. Until now...there is no development...development is politicized” “The communities that produces over 80% of what keeps Nigeria’s economy going does not have portable water to drink. Go there. No road network, no light. It is not the luxury. Talk about water! Talk about water! Water and...so, the government is not serious about these things” “...development of the region is not in its agenda and the government is never sincere about it”
Participant 11 (Elder/community leader)	“...up till now the Niger Delta has not been developed. Nothing has changed from the time the 30,000 people laid down their arms till now. Nothing has changed in the Niger Delta. The only thing that has changed is that the oil companies are able to explore. Their output is about 3,000 and something million barrels of oil per day and the Nigerian government... because the Nigerian government is 60% partner in the joint venture of taking crude out of the Niger Delta and selling it and owning it. And so, the Niger Delta people have not benefitted as far I know and as far as I am concerned and as far as I will continue to argue. We have not benefitted. The amnesty is not a developmental agency. “...as long as they don’t address the reason why people carry arms, agitate...and you want to address the carrying of the arms, you won’t succeed”
Participant 13 (militant)	“As I speak to you, there is no pipe borne water, no road and all of that in the Niger Delta. But resources from the Niger delta is used to develop other parts of the country”

Sub-Theme: Corruption

The issue of corruption within the amnesty program among its coordinators, Niger Delta politicians and elders/community leaders also confirms what Gurr said about tensions developing from the discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, and how this disposes men to violence’ (1971:23). He contends that people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and the intensity of discontent/frustration ‘[varies] with the severity of depression...’ (1971:87). The narratives of the study participants revealed that the Niger Delta people were not satisfied with the way the amnesty program was being managed and implemented hence the continuous agitations. According to participants, the worst part of it all was that some people were made to pay to be enlisted in the program. Corruption was high in the institution as people everywhere lobbied to ensure that the benefit from the policy.

It also became competitive and lucrative to get an institutional position in any agency related to amnesty. The participants disclosed that funds were diverted into private accounts by the people in charge of the implementation of the program. The benefits meant for some of the beneficiaries were either reduced or totally denied. This is the discrepancy between the “ought” and the “is”, which brings tensions that Gur is talking about in his theory. The people did not get what they agreed to get, therefore, they feel deprived. These developments led to continuous agitations and demonstrations even among the beneficiaries of the program. The beneficiaries of the program, who are currently on training outside the country, often visit the Nigeria High Commissions and

Embassies in their countries of studies to demonstrate against non-payment of stipends and other benefits. This is because funds meant for them were either diverted, cut or completely denied, hence, their frustrations and demonstrations to attract the attention of government, international community and the entire world. The following excerpts confirm this analysis.

Table 14

Excerpts Connecting Corruption to Proposed Theories

Participant	Quote
Participant 2 (Youth)	“...the poorer indigenes are even asked to pay some money to be shortlisted for the program. Children of the poor are not allowed to participate. Right now, there is ongoing crisis”
Participant 4 (Elder/community leader)	“We saw that those who were to coordinate the program took advantage of it to enrich themselves. They were sons and daughters of the area. They used the opportunity to enrich themselves and immediate families. They even have investment outside the country. ...the process of receiving the amnesty was corrupted”
Participant 8 (Youth)	“They see the program as a means of business to make money. ...to make money from the government. ...our Chiefs, traditional rulers are all corrupt”

Sub-Theme: Proliferation of Armed Groups

This sub-theme “proliferation of arms” could also be linked to what Gurr said about tensions developing from the discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, and how this disposes men to violence’ (1971:23). That people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and the intensity of discontent/frustration ‘[varies] with the severity of depression...’ (1971:87) is what is happening in the Niger Delta even with the amnesty program. The narratives of the study participants revealed that the Niger Delta people seem to have lost hope when it comes to the development of their region by the government. This is evident in the fact that even when they embraced dialogue and willingly surrendered their

weapons under the amnesty program, ten years after, the government has refused to pay attention to the region by developing it. Its focus is on continuous access to oil and other resources of the area while neglecting region.

As far as the participants were concerned, it was only the government, oil companies and the ex-militants that were benefiting from the amnesty program. The little peace brought by the program created a conducive environment for increase oil production for the benefit of the government and the oil companies and enabled the training and other related benefits to the ex-militants while the majority of the people of Niger Delta, which include children, youths, men and women (both young and old) were left out. As long as the region remains underdeveloped, to them, the amnesty program was a clear reward for armed struggle. This was the wrong message the amnesty program sent to the people of the oil communities in the Niger Delta and the Niger Delta as a whole.

Consequently, the Niger Delta people especially the youths, who felt left out and desired to share in the benefits from their resources, continue in agitations and armed struggle to get the attention of the government for inclusion in the program. This further led to the proliferation of arms and emergence of new militant groups in the region. This is what also led to the failure of the amnesty program, which confirms that Gurr's theory of relative deprivation could be used to better understand the problems of the amnesty program. The following excerpts supports this analysis.

Table 15

Excerpts Connecting Proliferation of Armed Groups to Proposed Theories

Participant	Quote
Participant 6 (Elder/community leader)	“So good intentions as the amnesty program was thought to be, it was obvious from the beginning that something was wrong. It was a clear reward for armed struggle, which sent the wrong message even to the communities in the oil producing areas that those persons, who have been into dialogue, discussions, negotiations, adopted the right approach. That was the message they got and that such was right. And so, we are now dealing with the generation of uneducated, half educated, school dropout, who have access to arms and were able to force the Federal Government into submission by blowing down oil pipelines reducing Nigeria’s oil explorations and exports. And what Nigeria did was to calculate the loss and give a little bit of the money to the armed agitators to keep them quiet and that has succeeded by and large to a large extent in enabling oil production to resume and export to be carried on. But, has that benefitted the communities? I think, no! None of the things that have been agitated for either under dialogue or conflict have come to pass. None! All that is seen is that the government has put money to subsidize the armed conflicts. So, we still have men and women with arms, who now get paid at the end of the month. That is like the Federal Government is actually helping some people to maintain a private army”
Participant 8 (Youth)	“They see the program as a means of business to make money. So, it is no longer freedom fighting but personal and criminal. To make money from the government”
Participant 9 (Ex-militant/beneficiary)	“I am also part of the Niger Delta ex-agitators and benefitted from the program. Today, I have been employed, working here. Is it not so? The question is, what of those who did not carry arms? Federal Government failed in that area. The government, who set up the amnesty program could have set up a plan that these are people who carried arms, how about those who did not carry arms, what should we do for them? These areas should be split out, then those who did not carry arms will also have their benefits just like those who did. ...let me tell you, the pockets of violent carried out today is done by those who have heard about the benefits of the program and did not benefit from it”

As indicated above, all the three theories adopted in the theoretical framework for this study adequately move in tandem with the findings of the study. The structural violence hypotheses that gave theoretical foundation to this study crystallized the reasons for the crisis and failure of the amnesty program as the finding also buttressed that the people in the Niger Delta region felt excluded from the larger national sharing of benefits

even as they consider themselves the engine room that power the economy of Nigeria. The people in the region have severe limitations that stop them from getting their desired needs and the pathetic aspect of this is that those limitations experienced in the region are not natural, rather, they were structurally and institutionally created by the people that established and coordinated the amnesty program. For example, the people that are at the helm of affairs in the country have been carried away with their elitist policies that have relegated non-elites to the background. The region is still underdeveloped despite the fact that the amnesty program was originally formulated to bring about peace and tranquility to enhance the development of the region. Unfortunately, 10 years after the establishment of the amnesty program, the policy has been unable to achieve the set targets. The region still lacks basic amenities that give succor to people. The feeling of marginalization by the people in Niger Delta seriously aggravated the tension experienced in the region. Therefore, regardless of the amnesty policy, this problem persists because the structures and institutions have not been altered.

Burton echoes similar narration in his human need theory that attempts to explain the source of conflicts, unlike some assertions that say there are some natural causes of conflicts inherently possessed by the people and lead to aggression, Burton asserts that conflicts or violence are direct results of social institutions or norms that are incoherent or incompatible with some basic needs of the people. The exploration of oil has had some hazardous consequences on the people, their water and environment. Apart from the truncation of natural ecosystem sustainability, the people have been finding it extremely difficult to meet their inherent needs. They become frustrated and aggressive even with amnesty program in place but, the beautiful thing as asserted by this sentiment is that to

resolve the conflict, the government must implement the objectives behind the creation of the amnesty and that is the development of the region among other things.

In the same vein, Gurr also attempted to explain why men rebel in his relative deprivation theory that suggests that a prolonged frustration can lead to aggression, the aggression then begets conflict. The discrepancy between what Niger Delta occupants think they deserve in measurement of the efforts and contributions to the national economy and what they think they get served as the pedestal for the militant crisis in the region. The oil rich region contributes to the national income than any other region, yet, they feel they are being marginalized by the central government in the sharing of benefits from oil proceeds, they therefore become bellicose and touchy so as to shake and truncate the status quo.

With the help of the theoretical framework for the study, the findings have indeed enabled a better understanding of why there are still ongoing agitations and emergence of new militant groups in the Niger Delta in spite of acclaimed success of the government amnesty program for the region. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the reasons for the failure of the amnesty program as revealed in the findings of the study are artificial and institutional, therefore, the solutions would also be artificial and institutional.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study titled Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges of the Government Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta and the Way Forward. 15 participants from four different groups - youths, elders and community leaders, militants, ex-militants and beneficiaries of the amnesty program in oil communities in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers states, participated in the

study. The results were derived from thematic analysis of the data collected during the interviews conducted for the participants in the study.

As earlier stated, one major theme with four different sub-themes emerged in this study and they were:

Main theme

- Policy Failure

Sub-themes

- Wrong beneficiaries
- Corruption
- Proliferation of armed groups
- Underdevelopment

The theme and the sub-themes that emerged from the data in this study have all been discussed with supporting quotes from the participants' narratives during the interview sessions. It was noted that the main theme reflected in most participant/participant groups' narratives. For instance, quotes from the narratives of participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 14 from the various participants/participant groups as shown in Table 6 reflected the theme. Trends of expressions and perception similar to all participants/participant groups was also noticed in the 4 sub-themes as shown in the excerpts on the sub-themes in Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 above. The theme and the sub-themes were further analyzed to see how they fit into the proposed theories in this study.

The next chapter will present summary and discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This was a qualitative research study that made use of narrative method of inquiry to examine 15 Niger Delta indigenes (indigenes of oil communities in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States)' insight of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forward. The 15 study participants were purposefully selected, and it is pertinent to note that the participants were made up of youths, elder/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program, aged 29 and above, who were born and raised to adulthood in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the selection of the study participants was based on a set of predetermined criteria as mentioned.

To begin the study, a detailed review of available literatures on the origin of the Niger Delta conflict and the amnesty program was necessary for a deeper understanding of the study and for guidance. The focus of the study was on study participants' perception of the amnesty program and why it could not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forward. Therefore, being grounded in narrative inquiry, an interview protocol was developed to capture how the study participants perceived the amnesty program and why the program could not sustain peace in the region as well as the way forward.

Even though there were lots of researches on the amnesty program as reflected under the literature review, there was no primary, empirically data-based research on the views of the people at the center of the conflict regarding the program and its inability to sustain peace in the region. The focus of the existing studies was on the general

assessment of the performances of the program and the study participants in most cases, were drawn from oil companies and government institutions that have understanding of the amnesty program and its implementation. Therefore, this study brought to light information that could bridge the gap of knowledge and literature to understanding of how the indigenes of Niger Delta perceived the amnesty program and what the way forward is. This study employed open-ended, face to face and one on one interviews that were audio recorded and later transcribed to collect data, which were thematically analyzed to respond to the following research questions:

1. How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?
2. How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program?
3. How do the militants perceive the amnesty program?
4. How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive the program?

One major theme with four different sub-themes featured in this study, which helped to investigate the meaning, impact and the importance of how the four participant groups perceived the amnesty program and what could be the way forward. The major theme was policy failure while the four sub-themes were: (1.) Underdevelopment (2) Corruption (3) Wrong beneficiaries (4) Proliferation of armed groups.

Discussion of Findings

The amnesty program was originally established to bring peace and tranquility in the Niger Delta so as to enhance the development of the region. However, more than 10

years after, the program has not been able to achieve the set targets and objectives. There are several reasons why the program failed in its purpose.

From the findings of this research, the program was poorly formulated and implemented by the Federal Government in the first instance. Most of the things the government promised to do including the development of the region have not been done. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the program failed as the temporary peace that was created to enable the development of the region was short-lived because the government reneged its part of the deals. The development of the region that the people so much craved for, was not carried out and the focus of the government was on continuous access of the resources of the region for its benefits and that of the oil companies involved in oil exploration in the region. The findings of the study further revealed that most of the Niger Delta people now believe that the development of the region has never been in the agenda of the government for the region. They see the amnesty program as a bribe to the people of the region to calm the militants while the government and the oil companies continue in the exploitation of the people of the Niger Delta and their resources.

Beside the above reasons, during the interviews, participants felt that the amnesty program should have aimed at empowering the indigenes or the local communities and put back in place their God given means of livelihood, which is fishing and farming. They said that this would have made them more productive than engaging them in skills and programs that were not enduring and could not be applied within their environment. Participants explained that the youths, who were engaged in the 'so-called' training and skill acquisition training under the amnesty program were at the end of their trainings, thrown back into the society, where they go back to poverty and their impoverished

environment that has been absolutely destroyed by oil spillage and gas flaring. According to them, most of the youths were engaged in skills that were not enduring and sustaining. This was because the enabling environment and infrastructures to sustain these skills were not there. There was no electricity, good road network or portable water and so on. Therefore, there was no way these youths could cope with the skills they acquired from the 'so-called' amnesty program. These they said, were also the problems. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that participants placed more emphasis on the development of the region.

More findings of the study further revealed that the process of implementing the program was hijacked by the corrupt elites that have used the instrumentality of power for their gluttonous interest. Some politicians in the region even see the program as a means of political settlements. They used the amnesty program to bring in political thugs, who helped to rig their elections into political offices. Others lobby for positions in amnesty program related agencies just to satisfy personal interest. They corrupt the criteria for inclusion as beneficiaries of the program. Findings revealed that most of the beneficiaries of the program were not ex-militants and had never been involved in armed struggle. Some were not even indigenes of the affected oil communities or from Niger Delta but got enlisted in the program while most of the people that the program was established for could not be enlisted in the program. All these issues created lots of problems in the program thereby making it unsuccessful.

It is pertinent to note that despite the emerging theme and sub-themes in this study, all participants across the four groups' perception as revealed during the interviews was that the amnesty program was a good initiative by the Federal Government as it was

meant to bring about human capital development and create the enabling environment required for resolving the long-standing issues in the region. Therefore, for the study participants, the amnesty program was a welcomed development. However, their narratives revealed that the problem was that after the government succeeded in pulling out the militants from the creeks, it refused to develop the region and address the other problems that brought about the armed struggle. Participants believed that the government was never serious about the development of the region because ten years after the establishment of the program, the region remains neglected and undeveloped as usual. This was in addition to other challenges that plagued the amnesty program and hindered the execution of its objectives. These challenges played out in the theme and sub-themes that emerged in this study.

The theme and the sub-themes were also consistent with the theoretical frameworks for this study. The three proposed theories for the study, the human needs, relative deprivation and structural violence theories, all helped to better understand the problems that plagued the amnesty program and the reasons behind continuous agitations and the emergence of new militant groups in the Niger Delta.

Finally, from the study, as far as the participants were concerned, even with the amnesty program in place, there was no certainty that peace can be achieved without going to the roots to address the fundamental problems of underdevelopment that lead to the conflicts in the first instance.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study is that the literature review section may not have covered or reviewed all the available literatures relating to the subject of study. Also,

focusing on only a few participants in a group may not allow the understanding of the perspectives of others within same participant group on the subject under study.

Therefore, there is a possibility of having a different result from this when it is repeated in a different environment with larger numbers of participants or with different research participants in each of the participant groups. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to the indigenes of Niger Delta outside the participant groups in this study.

Furthermore, the target sample limited the indigenes' perceptions of the amnesty program to four (4) states (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers States) out of the nine states that make up the Niger Delta and it is possible that the inclusion of indigenes from other states of the Niger Delta, who also have knowledge of the subject of study could have added depth to the study. In addition, it is also possible that their perceptions of the subject of study would have allowed the validation of the responses of the study participants during the interviews thereby making the findings of the study stronger.

Biases

There was potential to be biased in this research given the fact that I am also an indigene of the Niger Delta. This could have influenced participant selection, data collection and analysis. Therefore, to check these biases and put them under control, I applied bracketing/epoche, where I suspended my experience of the phenomenon under study and was open to new and different perspectives. As earlier explained in chapter 3 of this study, I did this by spending quality time to recall and note down personal experiences, perceptions and opinion that I might have had about the subject of study and discarded them before the commencement of the interview sessions with participants. I also wrote down pitfalls to be conscious of during the interview sessions and had an

open mind, ready to embrace new ideas and perspectives on the subject of study. The transcripts of the interviews were also made available to the study participants to confirm their accuracy and ensure that the data was devoid of biases, and they did provide confirmation.

Implications and Conclusions

This study explored the perspectives of the study participants regarding the government amnesty program in the Niger Delta and why it could not sustain peace in the region. Consequently, the study was designed to answer one central research question and four sub questions, and these were:

Research Question: How do the people from the oil communities in Niger Delta, who are affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program?

Sub-Questions: (1.) How do the elders/leaders of the oil communities in the Niger Delta affected by the conflicts, perceive the amnesty program? (2.) How do the youths from Niger Delta perceive the amnesty program? (3.) How do the militants perceive the amnesty program? (4.) How do the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program perceive the program?

The responses of the participants to the interview questions during the interviews provided answers to these research questions and the result of the study was presented in chapter 4.

The narratives of the study participants, who are indigenes of oil communities in the Niger Delta and very important primary stakeholders in the conflict in the region too, regarding how they each perceived the amnesty program, brought awareness, understanding and appreciation of facts about the program. The theme and sub-themes

that emerged from the study points to the fact that the solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta for peace to be sustained in the region goes beyond the creation of the amnesty program.

While the amnesty program was a welcomed development to an extent, there is need to revisit the policies guiding its creation to ensure full implementation of what was negotiated and agreed upon by the parties involved in the negotiation that ushered in the program. Again, and importantly too, the development of the region among other things, was what the parties involved negotiated for and agreed on.

The study demonstrated the fact that there was a gap between the literatures on the amnesty program and how the indigenes of the oil communities in the Niger Delta, who are important primary stakeholders in the Niger Delta conflict, perceived the program. Therefore, this study helped to narrow that gap and add to the available literatures and knowledge base on the Niger Delta conflict and the presidential amnesty program. The findings from the study also highlights the importance of providing a platform for the indigenes of the oil communities in the region to express their feelings and opinions about the program. This is given the fact that the positions of the other stakeholder, the government and the oil companies, regarding the amnesty program, were already known.

Furthermore, the themes that played out in the narratives of the study participants regarding their perceptions of the presidential amnesty program revealed the reasons why the program could not achieve its objectives even though it was a welcomed development. As reflected in the stories of participants, because the government did not fulfil its part of the bargain for the program especially, the development of the region

among other things, the people of the region now see the program as a means by the government to keep them quiet for continuous exploitation of their resources, hence, the continuous agitations by new set of agitators/militants such as the ‘Niger Delta Avengers’ among other new groups. Therefore, the results of the findings in this study will assist conflict analysts and even policy makers, to better understand the reasons behind continuous agitations and conflict in the Niger Delta despite the government’s several and most recent effort to intervene, which was deemed to be the best. This, of course, is with a view to finding permanent solution that will enable sustainable peace in the Niger Delta.

Recommendations for Stakeholders Based on the Findings of the Study

The essence of a research work is to proffer solution to existing problems. Therefore, this study offers some recommendations. It is pertinent to note that during the interviews with participants/participant groups on how they each perceived the amnesty program, the study also sought their opinions regarding the way forward in order to achieve and sustain permanent peace in the region. The data collected on this was also analyzed by coding and the linking of codes to form categories. While the study only generated its theme and sub-themes for analysis from participants’ data on their responses to the interview questions on how they perceived the amnesty program, the data collected on participants responses to interview questions on the conflict and the way forward was to guide in making recommendations to all stakeholders in the conflict on what the way forward was. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

The Federal Government of Nigeria

The Federal Government should ensure full implementation of the objectives of the amnesty program. It should ensure transparency of the process of inclusion in the amnesty program, which will undoubtedly quell ongoing anxieties by host oil communities over the non-inclusion of actual ex-militants in the program in favor of non-ex-militants and even non-indigenes of the affected communities, who are opportunist beneficiaries. Transparency and accountability are keys to douse suspicion and frustration by host oil communities. The Federal Government should ensure that the amnesty program works hand in hand with other established agencies on Niger Delta matters such as the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). While amnesty creates peaceful environment in the region and human capacity developments, the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Development Commission should take advantage of the temporary peace that has been created by the amnesty program to develop the region and address the issues behind the carrying of arms in the region against the government. Therefore, proper funding of these agencies is crucial to enable the achievement of their respective mandates.

The Federal Government should formulate mechanisms for the program implementation that targets the ex-militants for a seamless and impactful process of rehabilitation and reintegration for an ultimately peace driven region for exploration activities and development. It should ensure that undue political influence and manipulation of the amnesty program is checked and removed. Anti-corruption agencies should be empowered for effectiveness in monitoring the process of implementation of amnesty program policies and other related policies. The Federal Government should

revisit the issue of improved percentage of derivation/resource ownership for host communities to engender goodwill and corporation towards its objective for ease of doing business for local and foreign investors.

Furthermore, the Federal Government should modify the Presidential Amnesty Program of 2009 in tune with evolving contemporary realities aimed at its sustainability in the long term. This would likely attend to concerns by current emerging agitators and armed groups. For instance, the amnesty program is selective and targets only militants. The larger population of the people of Niger Delta, who do not carry gun is excluded. This is one of the reasons the program could not meet its objectives rather, it led to the proliferation of armed groups. Therefore, the government and oil companies must face palliative care that focus on the larger society regardless of the activities, community, age or gender. Regular/periodic meetings/exchanges by stakeholders could be organized by government to re-evaluate mandates and commitments for improvements and success of the amnesty program. It should ensure feedback mechanism for effective monitoring and efficiency of the program particularly to host communities. There must be indices for checking achievements and successes of the program. The Federal Government should establish an effective oversight, regulation and accountability process for the oil industry, which will address the underlying causes of pollution in the region including the maintenance of oil infrastructures and the re-examination of the oil spill investigation process.

Finally, the Federal Government should consider practicing true Federalism. This will enable states autonomy and control of their resources and payment of tax to the Federal Government.

Oil Companies

The oil companies operating in the region should adhere to their Corporate Social Responsibilities in line with international best practices. They should acknowledge the negative impact of oil exploration activities to host communities and display unwavering commitment to the mitigation of oil spills with its attendant effects on the environment (water, air and soil pollution). This is because degradation of the ecosystem, which affects livelihood of the people in affected communities leaves a trail of diseases, hunger, poverty and even death. They should properly clean up the affected communities in the Niger Delta and compensate them for harms done to them. The oil companies should also consider the relocation of their headquarters to the Niger Delta region upon significant restoration of peace in the region.

Host Communities

The host communities should consider peaceful methods of presenting grievances other than engaging in armed conflict as there are many peaceful methods for resolving conflicts such as negotiation and mediation among others. Therefore, regardless of their experiences, the host communities should discourage their youths from engaging in armed conflict. This is because at the end of the day, while all parties suffer, the host communities suffer more of the brunt of the crisis.

The youths and the people of Niger Delta should continue to acquire more education to know their rights and be enlightened on how best to tackle the issues confronting them in the region without resorting to arms. Finally, the Niger Delta people must be willing and ready to work in unity with other stakeholders to bring lasting

solution to the underdevelopment of the region. All hands must be on deck to get “Peter paid without robbing Paul.”

Recommendation for Further Research

Replication of this study with different groups of indigenes especially those from the other states of the Niger Delta, randomly selected as opposed to the purposeful selection of the ones in this study, is recommended. The additional research is to either reject or confirm the conclusions arrived at in this study.

Conclusion

The interest to research on the challenges of the amnesty program by exploring the indigenes of the Niger Delta's perceptions of the program was informed by the continuous agitations in the region in spite of the commendations of the program and its 'benefits' to the people, which include human capital development among other things. Quiet often, the ex-militants/beneficiaries of the program sent to study outside Nigeria in various countries of the world would visit the Nigeria High Commissions/Embassies in the countries, where they study, to demonstrate and disrupt the activities of the Missions just to draw the attention of the Nigerian government and the international community to their plights and get their problems resolved. The reasons for their demonstrations include negligence, lack of adequate funding, delay in payment of their stipends and even total denial of their entitlements and benefits. At home (Niger Delta) new armed militant groups continue to emerge thereby calling to question, the success of the amnesty program.

Therefore, this study is significant as it brought to light, the challenges of the amnesty program and why there is continuous agitations and emergence of new armed

groups in the region. It revealed how the indigenes of the oil communities in the Niger Delta, who are one of the major stakeholders in the crisis of the region, view the amnesty program. The research participants were excited about the study and willing to contribute. They saw the study as a platform for their voices to be heard regarding the program and even requested that their names be published alongside with their contributions if it were possible.

During the one on one interview sessions with participants, they all narrated their stories of how they perceived the amnesty program in their own ways. However, it was interesting to note how their respectful narratives ended up generating the same theme and sub-themes as the findings of the study unraveled the causes of continuous armed agitations and crisis in the Niger Delta despite the commendations of the program.

Consequently, in the field of conflict resolution, this study serves as a reference material and a pedestal for further researches in conflict resolution. It will assist conflict resolution practitioners to better understand the process of analyzing similar conflicts (natural resources related conflicts) and crisis situations anywhere in the world and of course, with a view to proffering necessary solutions. Therefore, the outcome of this research is a useful resource for conflict resolution experts across the globe as it gives the idea that the causes and solutions to conflict should not be generalized. Each conflict must be adequately studied in relation to the people and their environment in order to know the issues involved before recommending appropriate solution.

Furthermore, this study also serves as an affirmation of the different theories of conflict that see conflict as artificial phenomenon that requires artificial solution. It gives an idea that using natural solution for the problems created artificially might not work.

While seeking solutions to conflicts, the opinion of the people at the center stage really matters and must be considered. It also affirms that the different theories of conflict could be used to analyze and better understand conflicts.

The research further contributes extensively to the general body of knowledge. Its relevance to the Nigerian government is enormous. It presents to the Government the reasons why the previous policies have failed, the reason why the present ones are failing, and the alternative to prevent failure in the future. The policy makers within the corridor of power would find enough information on how to tackle the protracted conflicts in the Niger Delta region in spite of the different policies in place to resolve the problems.

This study also guides the international communities that have interest in solving the protracted conflict in the Niger Delta region on how to go about it. It avails them with first-hand information on why, when, how and where of the conflict.

The media team would find meaning in this study as it provides them with enough information that can be used to analyze and educate the public on the Niger Delta conflict and the government amnesty program.

The oil companies working in Niger Delta will also get useful information from this study. While carrying out their Corporate Social Responsibilities and other activities, this study will guide them on how to go about it.

The people of Niger Delta would also learn their lessons that without cooperation and dialogue, solution may be an illusion.

Finally, the lesson learnt from this study is that while the federal government amnesty program in the Niger Delta is seen by all as a good initiative on the part of the Nigerian government, the solution to the crisis in the Niger Delta goes beyond the

establishment of the amnesty program or any other intervention program. Consequently, the Nigerian government will find it difficult to succeed in addressing the carrying of guns against the government/oil companies in the Niger Delta without addressing the reasons behind the carrying of guns. Therefore, for peace to reign and be sustained in the region, there is need to revisit and review the policies guiding the establishment of the amnesty program to ensure full implementation of what was negotiated and agreed upon by the parties involved – that is, the development of the region among other things.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Sarah ISong
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

From: Nurit Sheinberg, Ed.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Date: February 4, 2019

Subject: IRB Initial Approval Memo

TITLE: Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges of the Government
Amnesty Program in the Niger-Delta and the Way Forward– NSU IRB Protocol Number
2019-68

Dear Principal Investigator,

Your submission has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board under Expedited review procedures on February 1, 2019. You may proceed with your study.

Please Note: Stamped copies of all consent, assent, and recruiting materials indicating approval date must be used when recruiting and consenting or assenting participants.

Level of Review: Expedited

Type of Approval: Initial Approval

Expedited Review Category: Expedited Category 6
Expedited Category 7

Level of Risk: Minimal Risk

Continuing Review: Continuing Review is due for this protocol on January 31, 2020. A continuing review (progress report) must be submitted one month prior to the continuing review date.

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Changes: Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation using the Amendment Form.

Post-Approval Monitoring: The IRB Office conducts post-approval review and monitoring of all studies involving human participants under the purview of the NSU IRB. The Post-Approval Monitor may randomly select any active study for a Not-for-Cause Evaluation.

Final Report: You are required to notify the IRB Office within 30 days of the conclusion of the research that the study has ended using the IRB Closing Report Form.

Your study was approved under the following criteria:

- Consent Participants according to criteria of 45 CFR 46.116 and 45 CFR 46.117

Translated Documents: No

Please retain this document in your IRB correspondence file.

CC: Ransford Edwards

Ismael Muvingi, Ph.D.

Appendix B: Research Flyer

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON ‘CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE GOVERNMENT AMNESTY PROGRAM IN THE NIGER DELTA AND THE WAY FORWARD’

Volunteers are needed to participate in a research study titled ‘*CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE GOVERNMENT AMNESTY PROGRAM IN THE NIGER DELTA AND THE WAY FORWARD*’. The purpose of the study is to explore the perspectives of the participants (indigenes of the oil communities – youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program) regarding the amnesty program. This is with a view to recommending an improvement of the program or a better alternative intervention approach to address the conflicts and sustain peace in the region.

Participants will be asked to recall some memories of the origin/impact of the crisis in the region and answer few questions regarding the amnesty program. The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour, and each participant will receive N3,000.00 cash reward in appreciation of his/her time. The research will be conducted in Abuja, Nigeria.

To participate in the study, one must be a youth, elder/community leader, militant, ex-militant/beneficiary of the amnesty program aged 29 and above, indigene of Niger Delta, born and raised in the Niger Delta to adulthood, live at Abuja, be able understand, speak and read English, and able to give consent to participate in the study. Interested people should please contact the researcher below:

Sarah Emmanuel Isong – +2348031923302

This Study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, Nova Southeastern University, Davie, Florida, USA.

Appendix C: RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for completing this Participant Form. The information provided will assist in determining your suitability to participate in this research. Your information in the study will be used to understand and make meaning of lived experiences and challenges of the Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta. Apart from contributing to the existing literature and knowledge base on the Niger Delta conflicts, it is hoped that it will enable recommendations to improve the program or for better intervention approach as well as way forward.

Name

Phone number

Email address.....

State of Origin.....

City & State of Residence

Sex

Marital Status

What is your age bracket? *Please circle one*

A) 18-20 B) 21-28 C) 29 and above.

Highest Level of Education

Were you born and raised to adulthood in any of the Niger Delta?.....

Appendix D: IRB Consent Form

NSU IRB APPROVED:
 Approved: February 1, 2019
 Expired: January 31, 2020
 IRB#: 2019-68-INT



General Informed Consent Form
NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled
“Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the challenges of the Government Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta and the Way Forward”

Who is doing this research study?

College: College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies.

Principal Investigator: Sarah Emmanuel Isong, MIPP (Master of International Policy and Practice).

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Dr. Ismael Muingi, LLB, PhD.

Co-Investigator(s): Nil

Site Information:
 Laro Than Nigeria Limited
 15A Mbjamima Crescent
 Wuse 2, Abuja
 Nigeria.

Funding: Unfunded

What is this study about?

This study will use a story method to discover the views of the research participants on the challenges of the government amnesty program in the Niger Delta.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a native of Niger Delta and have been affected by the trouble in Niger Delta. You also know about the ways the government have been trying to solve the problems in the Niger Delta. Therefore, you should be able to tell if these ways can actually solve the problems.

There will be about 15 participants in this study. All of them are from Niger Delta and selected from Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States.

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What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

On a day and time convenient for you, you and the researcher will meet at Laro Than Nigeria Limited, 15A Mbjamima Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja for an interview. This place is safe and secure. If you are not comfortable with the arrangement, you can choose your own place for the interview. You will meet alone with the researcher for about one hour to discuss what you think about the recent way the government is trying to solve the problem in the Niger Delta. The interview will be recorded. Later, you and the researcher will meet again to check if everything written is correct.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

There is a little risk to you in this study. The risk is not more than what you see every day.

If you are asked any question that makes you upset or uncomfortable, please, let me know so I can ask you to contact someone to help you.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You can leave this research study at any time. You will not lose anything if you leave. Any information collected from you before you leave will be kept safe for 36 months after the study. The information may be used in the study.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

Any new information that come into the study and may affect your stay in the study will be given to you. You may be asked to sign a new consent form.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits for being in this research study. We hope that what we will learn from this study can help to create better programs that will develop the Niger Delta. What we learn in the study will also help to better understand the Niger Delta problems.

Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?

You will be given ₦3,000.00 (\$10.00) for participating in the study. The money will be given to you at the end of the interview session.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information about you will be kept in secret. The tape recordings will be locked up. Only the people in the committee for the study will see your information. If the results of the study are published, your name will not appear. 36 months after the study ends, all the recordings and papers will be destroyed.

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Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?

Our discussions will be recorded on tape. It will be kept safe and later destroyed because what is on the tape could be used to find out who you are. This means the recordings may not be top secret. However, the researcher will listen to the tapes alone in a locked room to prevent anyone hearing it.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Sarah Emmanuel Isong, M.I.P.P (Master of International policy and Practice) can be reached at +2348031923302.

If primary is not available, contact:

You can reach us at +2348187831870

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

Nova Southeastern University(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790

IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

All space below was intentionally left blank.

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Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to join in this study. In the event you do join, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no price to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to join in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not surrender any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research.

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent and Authorization	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent & Authorization	Date

Appendix E: Recruitment Letter

Dear Sir,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY TITLED ‘CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF THE GOVERNMENT AMNESTY PROGRAM IN THE NIGER DELTA AND THE WAY FORWARD’

My name is Sarah Emmanuel Isong. I am a Doctoral Candidate of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies at the Nova Southeastern University, Florida, USA. I am currently completing my dissertation in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and having completed qualitative research courses, I am eligible to conduct this research to complete the requirements.

The goal of this study is to better understand whether the amnesty program is the solution for the Niger Delta conflicts. Specifically, this study is interested in exploring the perspectives of the participants (indigenes of the oil communities – youths, elders/community leaders, militants and ex-militants/beneficiaries of the amnesty program) regarding the amnesty program. This is with a view to recommending an improvement of the program or a better alternative intervention approach to address the conflicts and sustain peace in the region. If you are interested in participating in this study, please, complete the attached form and return them to me at the address indicated below.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a one and one interview with the researcher on your perspective of the amnesty program. The interview will take place at The Laro Than Nigeria Limited, 15A Mbjamima Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja, Nigeria. The venue is private and secured and, the interview will last for about an hour.

I sincerely appreciate your contribution to this study and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Emmanuel Isong
P. O. Box 14585
Wuse, Abuja
Nigeria.
Tel: +2348031923302
Email address: si99@mynsu.nova.edu

Appendix F: Site Approval Letter



RC:1222133

LARO THAN
NIGERIA LIMITED

15A Mbjamima Crescent Wuse 2, Abuja.

Tel: 08064646042, 07057148405; Email: larothanconsult@gmail.com, larothannigeria@yahoo.com

24th October, 2018Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314-7796**Subject:** Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Sarah Isong to conduct a research project entitled "*Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the challenges of the Government Amnesty Program in the Niger Delta and the Way Forward*" at *The Laro Than Nigeria Limited* and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility.

When the researcher receives approval for his/her research project from the Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board/NSU IRB, I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact the Nova Southeastern University's IRB at (954) 262-5369 or irb@nova.edu.

Sincerely,

Ochedikwu Jonathan
Executive Director
+2348064646042/larothanconsult@gmail.com

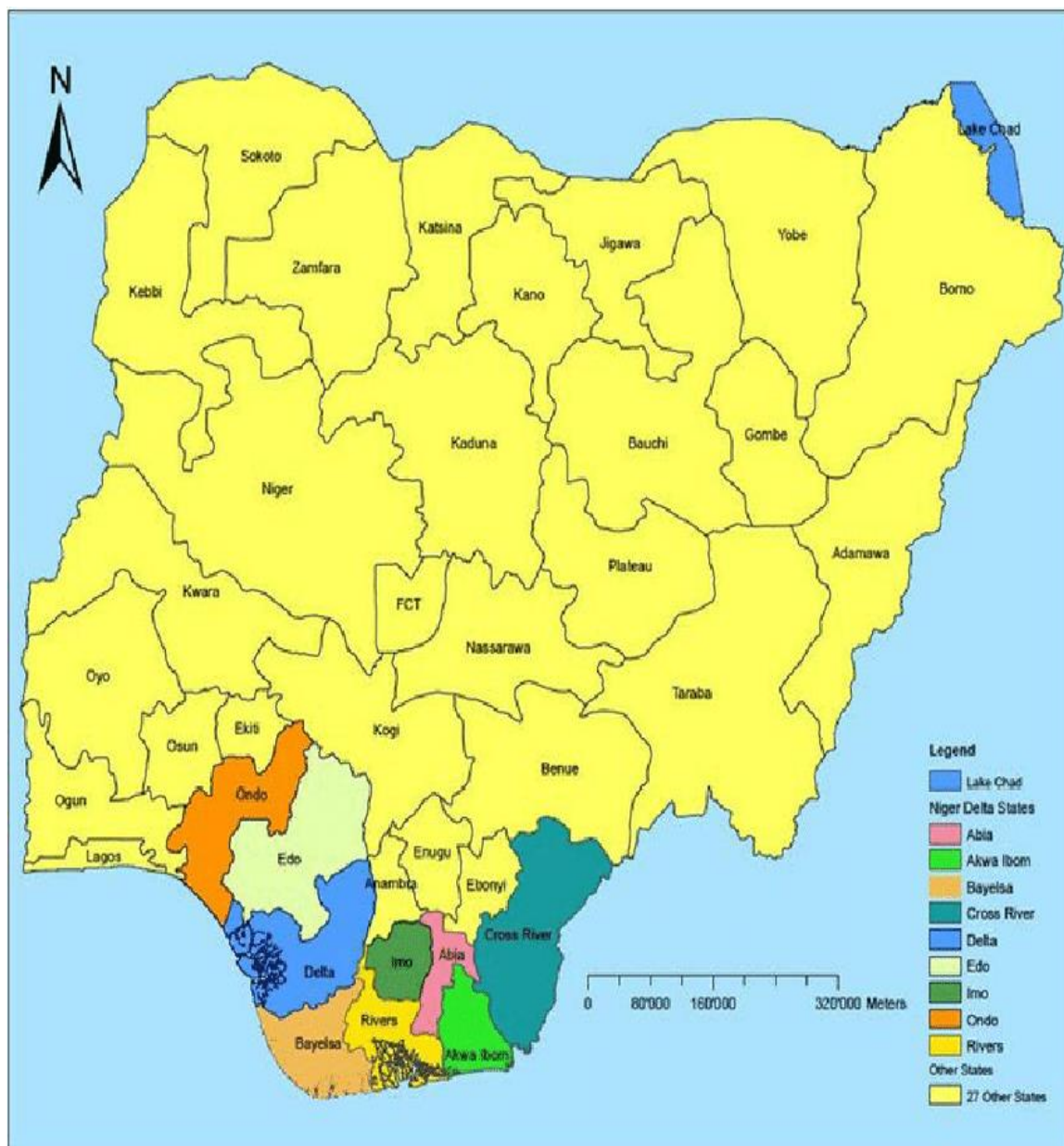
Appendix G: Pilot Phase Interview Questions

1. First, tell me how you feel about the protracted nature of the Niger Delta conflicts.
2. Tell me the story of how you and your community perceive the amnesty program.
3. Do you think this is why the program could not sustain peace in the region? Tell me more.
4. Tell me how you and your community have benefited from the program.
5. Tell me how the program has benefitted other indigenes of the oil communities, who are affected by the conflicts but are not militants or ex-militants.
6. In your opinion, do you think the amnesty program could resolve the conflicts in the Niger Delta?
7. Is the amnesty program the best intervention approach for the conflicts in the region and why?
8. What exactly do you think is the way forward?

Appendix H: Interview Questions

1. First, tell me how you feel about the protracted nature of the Niger Delta conflicts.
2. Tell me the story of how you and your community perceive the amnesty program.
3. Do you think this is why the program could not sustain peace in the region? Tell me more.
4. Tell me how you and your community have benefited from the program.
5. Tell me how the program has benefitted other indigenes of the oil communities, who are affected by the conflicts but are not militants or ex-militants.
6. In your opinion, do you think the amnesty program could resolve the conflicts in the Niger Delta?
7. Is the amnesty program the best intervention approach for the conflicts in the region and why?
8. What exactly do you think is the way forward?

Appendix I: Map of Nigeria Reflecting the Niger Delta



Appendix J: Map of the Niger Delta Reflecting the Four (4) Focused States- Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States, in this Study

